THE Atlantic MONTHLY

APRIL 2002

Churchill Takes a Fall

The revisionist verdict: ruthless, boorish, manipulative, alcoholic, myopic, and wrong about almost everything. But he was right about the thing that mattered most

by Christopher Hitchens

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THE Atlantic

VOLUME 289 NO. 4 / APRIL 2002

4 IN THIS ISSUE

8 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

14 INNOCENT BYSTANDER **FAST-FREE LIVING** *by Cullen Murphy*

THE AGENDA

18 Essays by *Michael Kelly, David Brooks, Richard A. Posner, Randall Kennedy,* and *Walter Russell Mead.* Plus *James Fallows* in Washington, *P. J. O'Rourke* at large, and *Eamonn Fingleton* on trade deficits

35 **SEEING AROUND CORNERS**
The new science of artificial societies can grow long-vanished civilizations and modern-day genocides on computers—and perhaps help us to spot trouble ahead *by Jonathan Rauch*

49 **DANCES WITH DAFFODILS**
Can postmodernist antics salvage one of the author's least favorite poems? *by Phyllis Rose*

53 **NIXON AND THE CHIEFS**
In the winter of 1971 Richard Nixon discovered that a Pentagon spy had been systematically stealing White House documents. Newly disclosed tapes captured Nixon's angry reaction—and discussions with his advisers about how to turn the situation to his advantage *by James Rosen*

61 **CENTERPIECE: STALKING THE AMERICAN LOBSTER**
Government scientists say lobsters are being dangerously overfished. Lobstermen say that's not so. Into this familiar standoff comes a new breed of ecologist, determined to understand the lobster's secret life *by Trevor Corson*

83 **RAW MATERIAL** *A short story by A. S. Byatt*

94 **CONSERVATIVE MEN IN CONSERVATIVE DRESSES**
The world of cross-dressers is largely a world of traditional men in traditional marriages. The author joins some of them, with their wives, on a cruise *by Amy Bloom*

PURSUITS & RETREATS

104 TRAVEL **THE SPLENDOR OF ANGKOR** *by Jamie James*

109 SPORT **A GENERATION OF GIDGETS** *by Jeff Spurrier*

113 PALATE AT LARGE **FORE STREET** *by Corby Kummer*

114 MUSIC **CONDUCTING: A BACKWOODS GUIDE** *by David Schiff*

BOOKS & CRITICS

118 **THE MEDALS OF HIS DEFEATS** Examining the revisionist version of Winston Churchill *by Christopher Hitchens*

137 **A MAGNIFICENT MISFIT** Bad Blood, by Lorna Sage *reviewed by Christina Schwarz*

139 **NEW & NOTEWORTHY** Irish contentment and Irish misery; Robert Cohen's "formidable comic energy"; a much-hyped "immature fictional excursion"

143 THE PUZZLER *by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon*

144 WORD FUGITIVES *by Barbara Wallraff*

Poetry by J. T. Barbarese (page 48), Maxine Kumin (page 59), and Patricia Clark (page 88).
Cover art by Mark Summers; heading drawings throughout by Istvan Banyai

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In This Issue

Contradictory and manipulative, boorish and inebriated—Winston Churchill the man bears little resemblance to the heroic figure of legend. **Christopher Hitchens** ("The Medals of His Defeats") surveys the growing body of revisionist literature and finds that only one facet of Churchill's reputation survives intact—but it is a very big facet. Hitchens, who writes for *Vanity Fair* and *The Nation*, is the author of *Unacknowledged Legislation: Writers in the Public Sphere* (2000) and *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (2001).

The marriage of computer and social science is offering surprising insights into a range of societal ills—from the near inevitability of segregated neighborhoods to the dynamics of genocide. **Jonathan Rauch** ("Seeing Around Corners") explores this emerging study of artificial societies. Rauch is a correspondent for *The Atlantic*, a senior writer and columnist for *National Journal*, and a writer-in-residence at The Brookings Institution. His most recent book is *Government's End: Why Washington Stopped Working* (1999).

Phyllis Rose ("Dances With Daffodils") is a professor of English at Wesleyan University and the author of numerous critical works and biographies, including *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (1983) and *The Year of Reading Proust: A Memoir in Real Time* (1997).

Previously unpublished transcripts of White House tapes reveal the reaction of Richard Nixon and his aides in 1971 when they discovered that they had become targets of espionage—by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. **James Rosen** ("Nixon and the Chiefs") is a White House correspondent for Fox News. His work has appeared in *The Washington Post*, *Harper's*, and *National Review*. His article in this issue arose out of research for a biography of Attorney General John Mitchell.

Trevor Corson ("Stalking the American Lobster") spent two years working full-time on lobster boats off the coast of Maine, where he watched his fellow lobstermen bring in the largest hauls in history. Corson was for three years the managing editor of *Transition*, an international review of politics, culture, and ethnicity.

A. S. Byatt ("Raw Material") is the author of numerous books, including *Possession*, which won the 1990 Booker Prize; *Babel Tower* (1996); and *The Biographer's Tale* (2001).

The novelist **Amy Bloom** ("Conservative Men in Conservative Dresses") accompanies a group of couples on a special cruise—a cruise for men who are cross-dressers and the wives who indulge them. Bloom has been a finalist for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her article in this issue will appear in somewhat different form in her forthcoming book, *Normal*, to be published in September by Random House.

This month in The Agenda: *The Atlantic*'s editor, **Michael Kelly**, considers the historical quest for the "ideal war"; **David Brooks** reveals his four finalists for what will become the defining issue of the twenty-first century; Judge **Richard A. Posner** takes a controversial stand on the recent outbreak of plagiarism; **Randall Kennedy**, a professor of law at Harvard University, observes the parallels between racial profiling and affirmative action; **Walter Russell Mead**, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, makes a "case against Europe"; **James Fallows** looks back at a sudden change of strategy in the air war in Afghanistan; **P. J. O'Rourke** draws a counterintuitive lesson from the Enron scandal; and **Eamonn Fingleton**, who writes on economics from Tokyo, explains why the United States should pay attention to something it has forgotten all about—the trade deficit.

Travelers keen to visit Cambodia's ancient monuments no longer have to rough it, reports **Jamie James** ("The Splendor of Angkor"). James, a veteran traveler in Southeast Asia, has written for numerous publications, including *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The American Scholar*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*. His first novel, *Andrew and Joey*, was published in February.

Jeff Spurrier ("A Generation of Gidgets") explains how the macho culture of American surfing is being challenged by a new generation of female surfers, who are bringing the sport back to its roots. Spurrier teaches journalism at California State University at Los Angeles.

In this month's installment of Palate at Large **Corby Kummer** ("Fore Street"), an *Atlantic* senior editor, pays a visit to a revamped warehouse overlooking Maine's Casco Bay, where chef Sam Hayward turns the spit.

David Schiff ("Conducting: A Backwoods Guide") describes the quiet rigors of a summer camp for conductors in Maine. Schiff, a composer and a professor of music at Reed College, is a frequent contributor to *The Atlantic*. His clarinet concerto, *Canti di Davide*, had its world premiere in Norfolk, Virginia, last October, with the clarinetist David Shifrin and the Virginia Symphony.

Christina Schwarz ("A Magnificent Misfit") reviews *Bad Blood*, the winningly odd memoir of the late Lorna Sage, one of Britain's most admired women of letters. Schwarz is the author of *Drowning Ruth* (2000). Her second novel, *All Is Vanity*, will be published in the fall.

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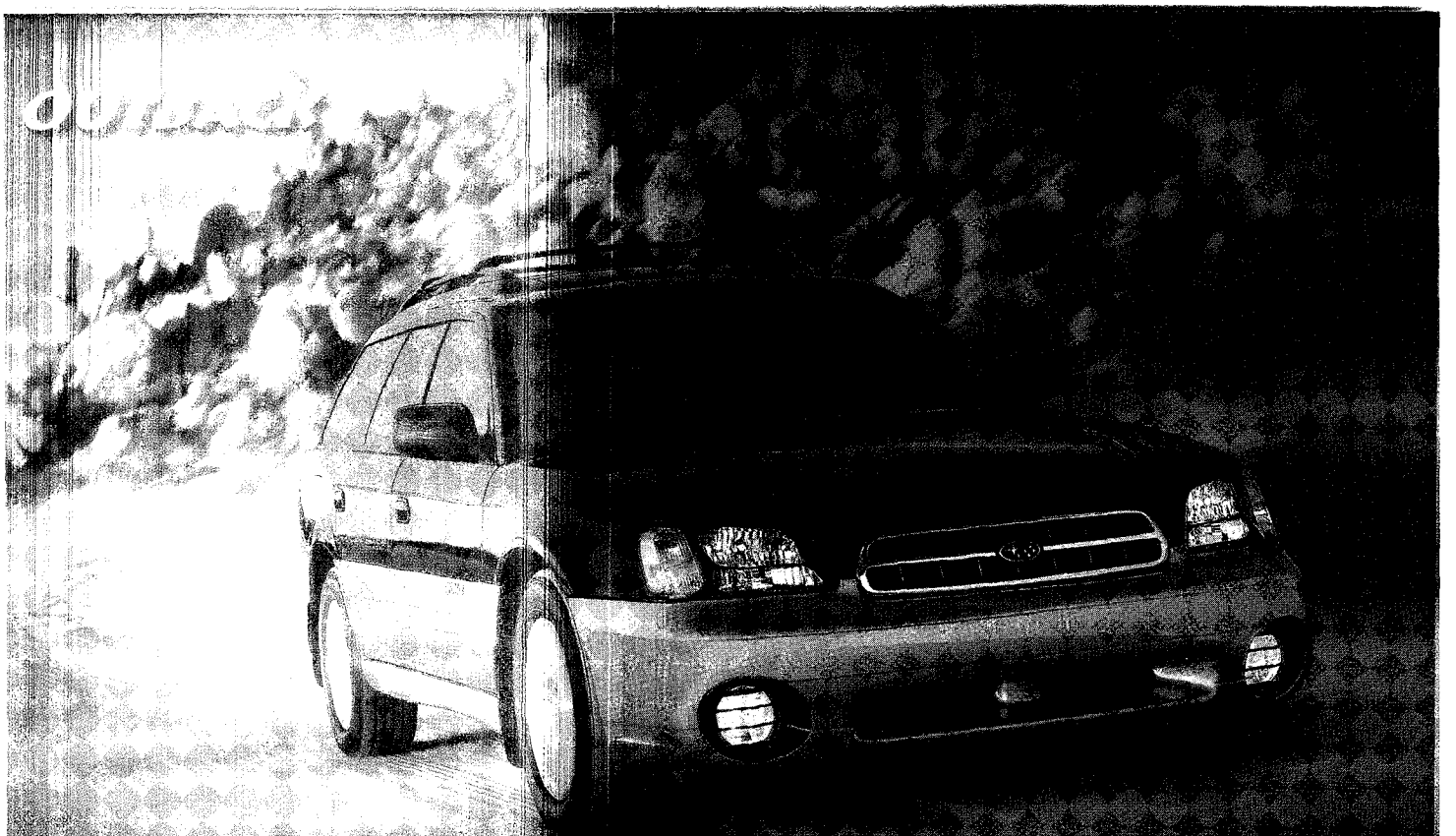

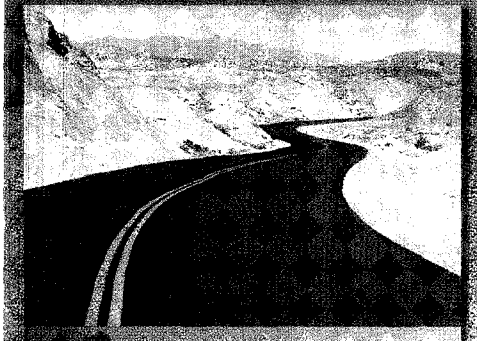

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This month on the Web . . .

Winston Churchill in *The Atlantic Monthly*

A collection of articles by and about Churchill from the pages of *The Atlantic*, including an evaluation of Churchill by Isaiah Berlin, a description of the Prime Minister's visits to the White House by Eleanor Roosevelt, and two articles by Churchill written early in his career.

Interview: Jonathan Rauch

Rauch, a correspondent for *The Atlantic*, discusses "Seeing Around Corners," his article in this month's issue.

Politics & Prose: Reviews by Jack Beatty

A monthly column on newly published books and political and cultural trends by one of *The Atlantic*'s senior editors.

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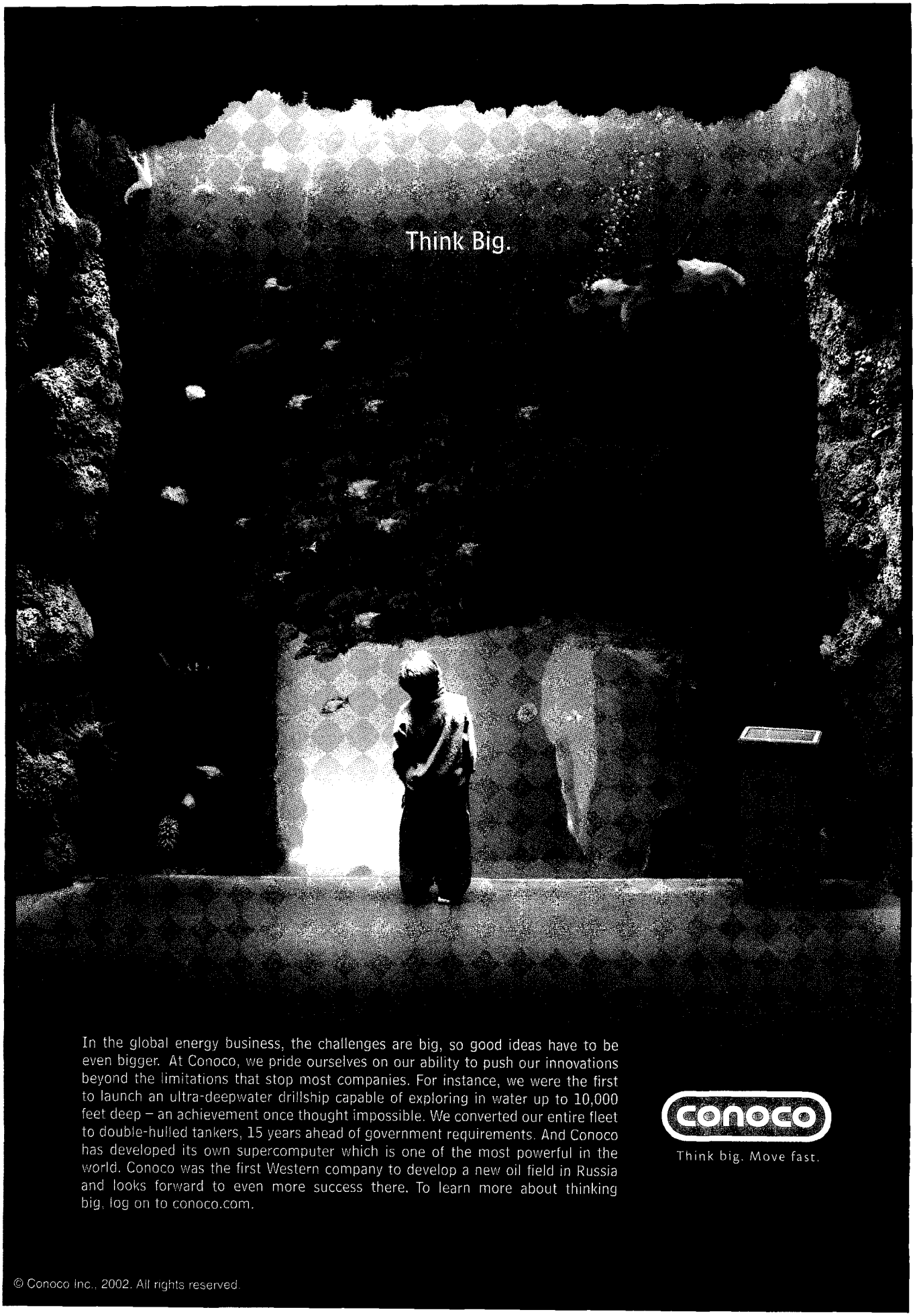

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Letters to the Editor

New Grand Strategy

Benjamin Schwarz and Christopher Layne call for a (mostly) sensible U.S. strategy of geopolitical balancing ("A New Grand Strategy," January *Atlantic*). But the specific policy steps they call for are ill advised and based on profound misinterpretations of current military and economic events.

They mischaracterize U.S. policy to date as a deliberate attempt to establish a repressive hegemonic domination over the country's allies. It is true that the United States occasionally uses big-stick diplomacy to thwart threats to its interests, as it should, and this sometimes undercuts our allies' independent military initiatives. The Suez crisis was a prime example. But in the main, U.S. policies have permitted allies, especially Europe and Japan, to develop remarkable economic might and political room to maneuver since World War II.

Europe has indeed failed to translate its political aspirations, competitive defense industries, and nuclear deterrent forces into a credible "counterweight" to American power. But this has less to do with Machiavellian tricks by Washington than with Europe's inability to get its house in order. Washington can hardly be blamed for all the conflicting national interests and chaotic institutional arrangements that cripple the EU's embryonic foreign and defense policies.

Far from seeking to "squelch" allies' efforts to acquire the ability to defend their interests in global affairs, a main thrust of U.S. policy has been to call for greater military "burden sharing." Whatever skepticism about Europe's security aspirations was expressed in the 1992 Pentagon draft policy statement the authors cite, it represents at best a single strand of thought within the foreign-policy establishment. Washington's attitude toward the European Security and Defense Policy may be ambivalent, but it is neither openly nor implicitly hostile.

The authors are correct when they say that the United States should seek a global system in which there is a dynamic balance among the great powers. They are wrong, however, that Washington should give (presumably enlightened, benevolent) regional powers a free hand in their own "legitimate spheres of influence," wherever those might be. The potential gendarmes Schwarz and Layne identify include China and Russia, countries with long histories of stomp-on-your-neighbor nationalism. The disastrous economic, ecological, and political legacies of Moscow's free hand in Eastern Europe show that this scheme is a recipe for bullying, instability, and conflict. Withdrawing from our mutual-security treaty with Japan, or throwing Taiwan to the wolves, as the authors recommend, would be equally counterproductive. How would feeding regional fears of a resurgent, loose-cannon Japanese military keep Asia stable?

If the United States is to play the role of balancer, as the authors recommend, it must remain engaged in cooperative relationships with other great powers. Washington should avoid arrogant rhetoric about being the "indispensable nation" and do its best to assume a constructive role in bodies like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. But this role cannot come at the expense of the active security engagement that has, after all, helped to keep the peace between Germany and France, Greece and Turkey, Japan and China, for more than fifty years. Even in the Muslim world the need for U.S. engagement is widely recognized. Consider how many Afghans blame their country's current plight on American "abandonment" after the Soviet retreat.

Mark W. Libby
Alexandria, Va.

The proposal by Benjamin Schwarz and Christopher Layne is a welcome attempt to readdress some of the long-standing assumptions of American foreign policy. In the wake of the September 11 attacks it is clear that we must take a step back and see what mistakes we have made. But the authors are wrong to see recent events as wholly undermining the arguments in favor of maintaining current U.S. international dominance.

As a model for their approach they cite Great Britain from 1700 to 1914 and the United States before 1945 as nations that "successfully devolved onto others the responsibility for maintaining regional stability." Their definition of the word "successfully" bears some questioning, however, because although Great Britain and the United States flourished in the financial sense, their attempts at balancing regional powers ended disastrously. It is not coincidence that the periods cited ended abruptly with two of the bloodiest wars ever fought. When precisely balanced political situations collapsed, two equally balanced foes left tens of millions lying dead.

It is precisely because of its overwhelming power and its global reach that the United States was able to launch a campaign against al Qaeda without killing huge numbers of civilians. The United States is in a unique historical situation; we have the ability to stop conflicts worldwide through economic and military leverage. Although the costs of being in this position have recently become clear, the costs of abandoning it are far greater. Do the authors think that the balance-of-power approach that failed so spectacularly in Europe at the beginning of the past century is going to be more successful between, for instance, India and Pakistan? Should we be gambling with millions of lives?

Benjamin E. Lauderdale
Cambridge, Mass.

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Benjamin Schwarz and Christopher Layne attempt to set the groundwork for a multipolar international order. However, they present a strategy that would more likely lead to renewed isolationism on the part of the United States. Increased international cooperation would undoubtedly help to ensure a more stable world. Yet the method of "offshore balancing" proposed by Schwarz and Layne represents a dangerous retreat from security problems, rather than a more balanced approach to international security in the post–Cold War world.

Suggesting that regional powers be allowed to provide for security is akin to allowing the school bully to keep order on the playground. The largest power in a region is not necessarily the most suitable guarantor of peace and security, and simply asserting that nations will police a region because "it would naturally be in their interests to do so" in no way guarantees that these states will use responsible (or even humane) methods. In the cases where stable, dependable partners do exist, such as the European Union and Japan, the political will and/or wherewithal to provide regional security is lacking; witness the heated debate in Germany over sending troops to Afghanistan. In more-troubled areas, such as Central Asia and the Middle East, ongoing conflict or persistent tensions (between India and Pakistan, for example) demonstrate that no state is in a position to assume the role of a regional stabilizing force. Hence the necessity for U.S. involvement to begin with.

Aaron P. Boesenecker
Hamilton, Mich.

Benjamin Schwarz and Christopher Layne reply:

Mark Libby is wrong. From the beginning of the Cold War, Washington consistently sought to ensure that neither a powerful Germany nor a united Europe be permitted to emerge as an independent force. America's apprehensions about its allies' acquiring the capacity for independent strategic action are illustrated by Washington's response to the European Union's military and foreign-policy initiative, known as the European Security and Defense Policy, and to the EU's December 2000 decision to put teeth into the ESDP by creating a rapid-reaction force. U.S. reaction to the RRF was swift and hostile. To stop the ESDP from undercutting NATO, Washington promulgated the so-called "three Ds": the policy initiative must not diminish NATO's role, must not duplicate NATO's capabilities, and must not discriminate against NATO members that do not belong to the EU. Of course, because the United States has a virtual monopoly on NATO's high-end military capabilities (intelligence, advanced surveillance and reconnaissance systems, power projection, and precision-guided munitions), if the "three Ds"—especially the first two—were observed, Europe would be prevented from ever achieving strategic autonomy, and would remain dependent on the United States for its security. In short, America's position regarding "burden sharing" has amounted to the proposition that Washington try to stick its "partners" with more expenses while granting them no greater authority or independence. America's partners have never cottoned to this formula, and have consistently and reasonably held that if the United States is going to lead, it's going to have to pay the costs and incur the risks that accompany leadership.

Contrary to Mr. Libby's implication, we never suggested that China and Russia are benevolent. But all *great powers stomp on their neighbors; perhaps Mr. Libby has forgotten America's war of conquest against Mexico. Soviet domination of Eastern Europe was unjust and unpleasant, but it obviated the two problems—instability and conflict—that Mr. Libby says it caused. (When did those Cold War–era wars in Eastern Europe break out?)*

Historically, Benjamin Lauderdale's argument is very weak. The United States could not have prevented the outbreak of World War I. Ironically, the U.S. entry into the war foreclosed the possibility of a compromise peace in 1917, thereby prolonging the conflict and costing the lives of American soldiers as well as those of the other belligerents. The prolongation of the war also created the social and political conditions that allowed communism and fascism to come to power in interwar Europe. Woodrow Wilson's war, it could be argued, became the "war to make the world safe for totalitarianism."

Aaron Boesenecker misunderstands the nature of international relations. Power, not "humane" intentions, guarantees stability. What court determines which great power is "the most suitable guarantor"? The United

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States happens to be (most of the time) a very nice country. It prevailed in Afghanistan, however, not because it's good but because it's strong. As for Mr. Boesenecker's denigration of the "political will" of our allies, who can blame them for their inability to assert themselves in security affairs when Washington has for decades squelched initiatives (the ESDP, for example) that would have made that assertion possible?

Torture

Reassuring as it is that Bruce Hoffman ("A Nasty Business," January *Atlantic*) would never "condone, much less advocate" the use of torture to extract information from those suspected of possessing information about terrorism, his article leaves the distinct impression that others, less practiced in the wringing of hands than he, may very well be forced to take out a few bad guys in order to keep America safe. One does not have to be a "softie," however, to recognize exactly what is wrong with that approach.

Torture violates both the U.S. Constitution and the Convention Against Torture, to which the United States is a signatory. Torture is morally repugnant. As Hoffman's article fleetingly admits, torture often elicits inaccurate information, and it always alienates the very people whose sympathy is needed in order to put an end to the conflict at hand.

I am not in a position to evaluate the testimony of the Sri Lankan army officer whom Hoffman calls Thomas (though I would note that for all Thomas's bravado, the war in Sri Lanka grinds on just as brutally as ever), but as one who has interviewed admitted torturers and scores of their victims, I can say unequivocally that "intelligence" gained through physical and psychological abuse is almost always wrong. The reason is obvious. As one Liberian prisoner who had been forced to lie down in a bed of red ants for more than an hour told me, "I would have said anything to get out of that pit of bugs." Alistair Horne, whom Hoffman quotes approvingly, admits as much when he notes that the names of Algerian terrorists the French entered onto their *organigramme* were "not always necessarily the right name."

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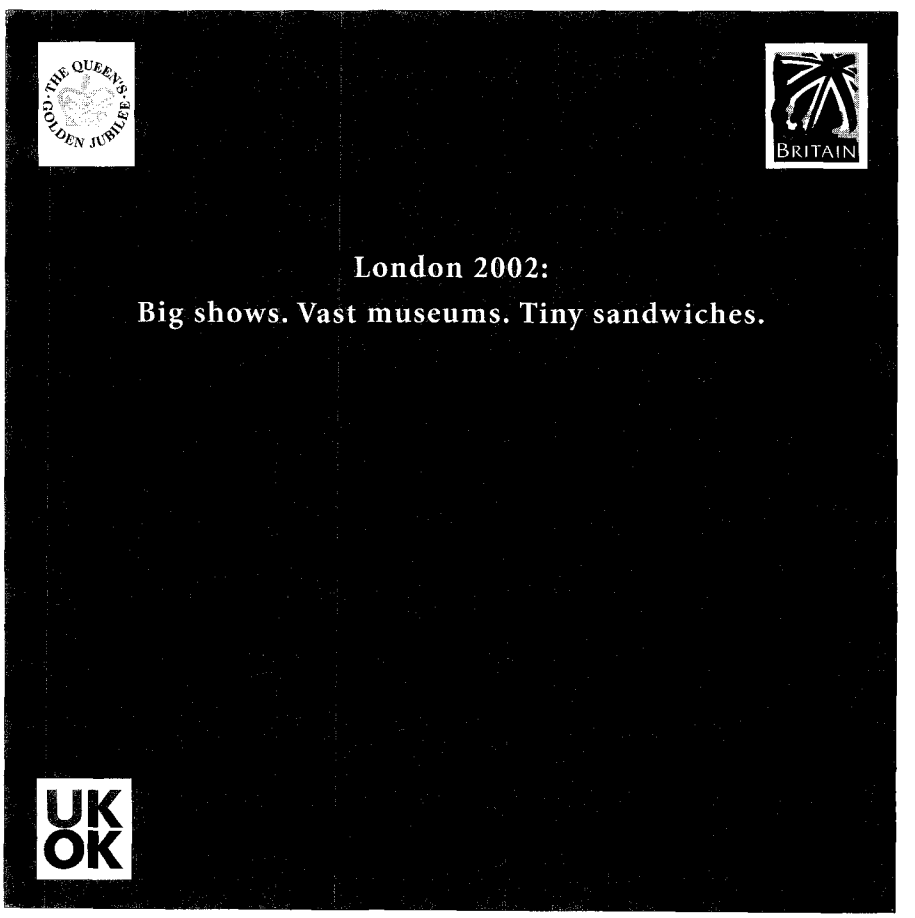

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obtain information through torture, authorities invariably end up manhandling innocent people. This causes tremendous resentment in the communities from which those innocent come, as Hoffman acknowledges in the case of Algerian Muslims. But those are the very communities whose citizens are potential sources of exactly the kind of data that can help stop the violence in the first place. Hoffman sympathetically quotes a British intelligence officer defending the torture of Irish terrorists. What he fails to mention is that—as John Conroy so potently describes in his groundbreaking study *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People*—the government of the Republic of Ireland was so outraged by British atrocities in the 1970s that it abandoned the kind of cautious diplomacy that has finally brought relative peace to Northern Ireland and filed suit against the United Kingdom before the European Commission on Human Rights. Who knows how much earlier "the Troubles" might have been resolved and how many lives saved had Britain not resorted to torture in the first place.

Certainly ours would be a far simpler world if the formula "torture a terrorist, save a million people" could be relied upon. Because it cannot, we have resort to human rights. The consequences of their violation are not a safer but a far more dangerous world for every one of us.

William F. Schulz
Executive Director
Amnesty International USA
New York, N.Y.

State-sponsored terrorism simply doesn't work. Only after Peru discontinued its tactics of mass murder, torture, and abductions did it make progress against Sendero Luminoso and Tupac Amaru. In El Salvador senior FMLN officials complained of the loss of propaganda and recruiting capability that resulted when fewer human-rights abuses were carried out by the government. Terror is a great tool for engendering momentary compliance; but once the threat of terror is gone, only bitter antagonism toward the perpetrator remains.

Chris Davis
Collierville, Tenn.

As a psychotherapist who has treated survivors of politically motivated torture for more than twelve years, I want to respond to Bruce Hoffman's article. The vast majority of survivors we see—in some thirty torture-treatment centers in the United States alone—are noncombatants who are at most related to the accused by class, color, or culture. First a government tortures "terrorists and suspected terrorists," as Hoffman says (the police and the military alone decide who is either). Then torture is extended to those who know or are suspected of knowing the accused or suspected terrorists. Then those are tortured who object to the torture of the others; they, too, become "suspect" eventually. We are being asked not if we will support the torture of terrorists but if we will support the torture of our neighbors—or ourselves, "if need be."

Gerald Gray
The Center for Survivors of Torture
San Jose, Calif.

Bruce Hoffman's concluding line, a pained and reluctant question rather than a simple yes or no, reflects the moral confusion we all feel about torture. But one of his statements is misleading. Jacques Massu, who directed the French forces during the Battle of Algiers, has not "remained forever unrepentant" on the use of torture. To the contrary, General Massu has frequently voiced his doubts, most recently in a *Le Monde* interview in November of 2000. He reaffirmed his earlier declaration that "torture is not indispensable in time of war," asserting that France "could have and should have proceeded without torture in Algeria." He also supported the call of French intellectuals that France officially acknowledge and condemn the use of torture during the war in Algeria.

Yet when asked if he thought war without torture was possible, Massu, like Hoffman, wavered. Although this should always be the goal, he said, he was not "optimistic," given his knowledge of human nature, that it could always be reached. Perhaps we Americans are only now catching up with the Massus of the world.

Robert Zaretsky
Houston, Texas

Bruce Hoffman replies:
My understanding of General Massu's later reflections on the use of torture was gleaned from Alistair Horne's A Savage War of Peace *(1977) and John Conroy's* Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People *(2000). I was not aware of the more recent newspaper interview that Robert Zaretsky cites, and I am grateful to him for calling my attention to it. Indeed, of the four letter writers, he alone understood the point of my article. Other letters offer gross generalizations masquerading as certitude (that intelligence obtained through either physical or psychological duress is "almost always wrong"), causalities that are neither demonstrably linear nor empirically proved (the connection between a case filed with the European Commission on Human Rights in 1971 and the peace accord that was agreed to in Northern Ireland—with the active assistance of the United States—in 1998), and historical inaccuracies (that Peru's triumph over terrorism was somehow made possible by the benign exercise of power of a leader who dissolved the legislature and imposed martial law to ensure his continued reign and then expanded the repressive powers of the state).*

Most Dangerous Job

Eric Schlosser ("How to Make the Country's Most Dangerous Job Safer," January *Atlantic*) states that workers in the meat-packing industry suffer the highest rate of serious injuries in private industry. Statistics are always subject to interpretation, and on-the-job injuries can be described in various ways—per man-hour, as a percentage of the work force, and so forth. Nevertheless, a commercial fisherman is more likely to suffer serious injury on the job than any other civilian worker.

Ted Kirby
Waynesville, N.C.

Eric Schlosser conveniently ignores the fact that from about 1950 through the early 1980s wages and working conditions in meat-packing had improved dramatically because of changes forced by organized labor. Jobs in the industry were eagerly sought by American citizens because they provided a respectable middle-class living. Then

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the industry broke the unions, backed company buses up to the Mexican border, and wiped out the dreams of those ordinary citizens who also were "in search of a better life."

Does Schlosser see any connection between the importation of cheap and exploitable labor and the steady drift back toward working conditions of a century ago? And is he, like many of us, also puzzled that despite the use of "poor immigrant workers" we are paying more these days for our favorite cuts of beef?

David A. Gorak
Midwest Coalition to Reduce Immigration
Villa Park, Ill.

Eric Schlosser replies:

Deep-sea fishing has the highest fatality rate of any occupation in the United States. Meat-packing has the highest rate of injury and the highest rate of serious injury, as measured in lost workdays. Deep-sea fishermen are more likely to die on the job; meat-packing workers are more likely to be seriously hurt—and that's why I called theirs "the most dangerous job." Whereas the hazards on a fishing boat are caused mainly by inclement weather, the dangers of our slaughterhouses stem largely from greed.

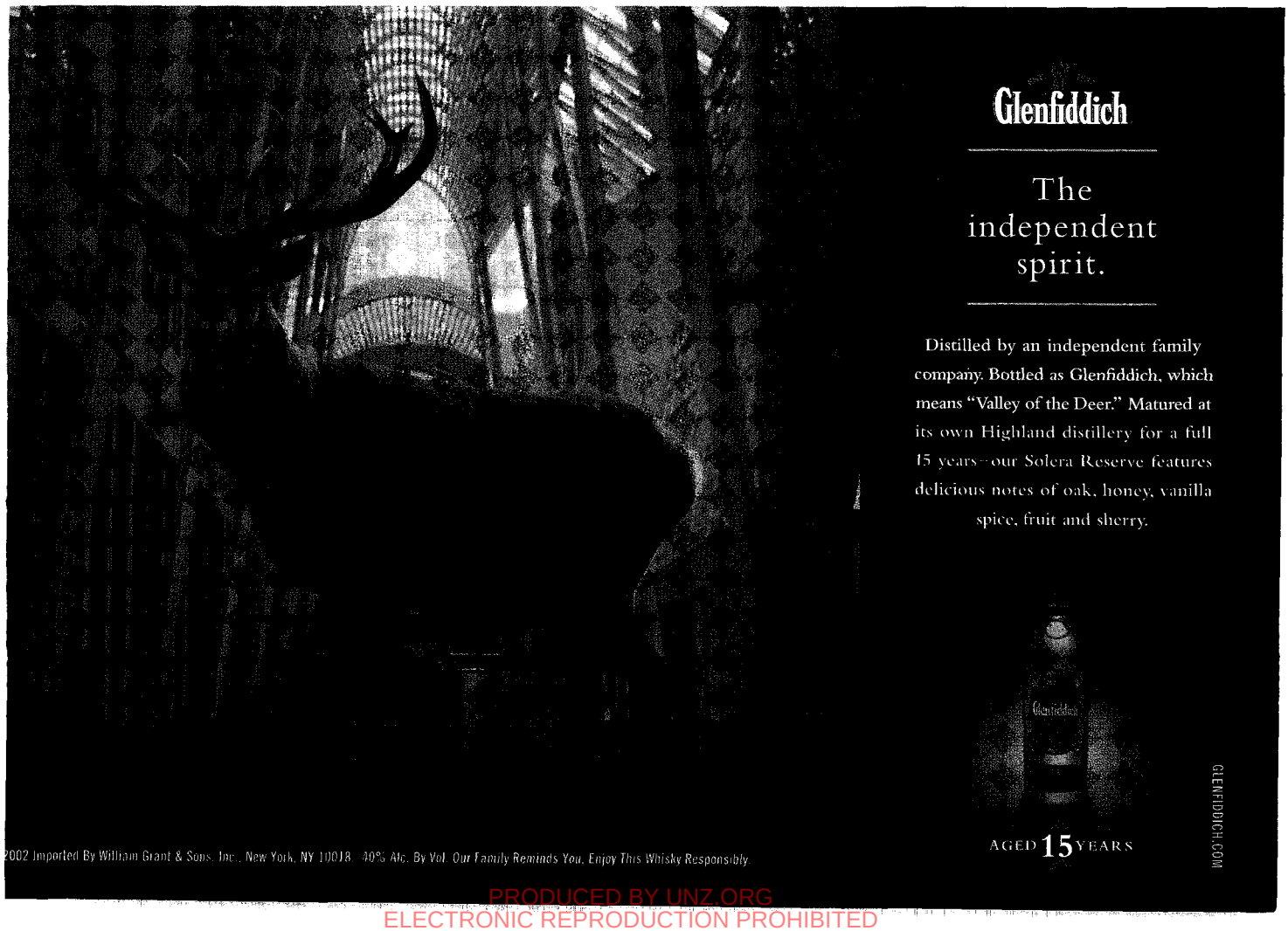
In my book Fast Food Nation, *I describe at length how the large meat-packing companies broke unions, cut wages, eliminated benefits, imported a migrant work force from Mexico—and within a decade turned some of America's highest-paying industrial jobs into some of its lowest-paying. These companies now use a variety of tactics to avoid paying adequate compensation to their injured workers, imposing such medical costs onto the surrounding community. Union organizing, tough enforcement of worker-safety laws, and the prosecution of negligent meat-packing executives would greatly improve conditions in the industry.*

Advice & Consent

In a thoroughly engaging note Cullen Murphy points out that one of the smaller states in the union is often used by Americans as their basic unit of world geography ("The Gold Standard," January *Atlantic*). Unfortunately, this standard is widely misapplied. Swaziland is not "about the size of New Jersey," as claimed by *The New York Times*, but is more than twice as large. The Netherlands' area is not about twice that of New Jersey, as stated in *The Washington Post*. It is more than five times as large! Perhaps journalists should study their maps more carefully.

Murphy tells us of the proposed units of human suffering (the "dukkha"), of political-talk-show blather (the "gergen"), and of boredom, fame, and hypocrisy that are under development at our research universities. None of these notions can be expected to have the staying power of, say, the most ancient standard of feminine attraction—that characterizing Helen of Troy. In our diminished society it seems that few women can measure up. Thus our contemporary unit is very much smaller: the milli-helen is just enough beauty to launch a single ship.

Sheldon Lee Glashow
Brookline, Mass.



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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

FAST-FREE LIVING

What Americans would do if they were serious about stopping to smell the flowers

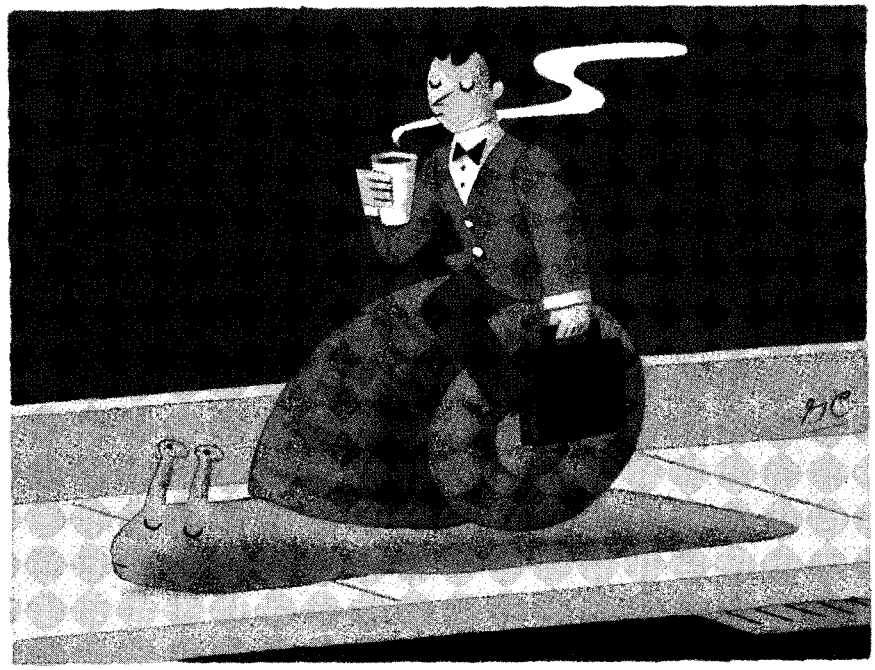
.....

Is the American lifestyle slowing down, in a visceral response to national trauma and the onset of war? Judging from commentaries by cultural analysts and newspaper columnists, the answer is yes.

A *Boston Globe* editorial looked back on a hard year: "But it brought growth, too, and a deeper understanding of just how fragile life is, and how what we often take for granted—the kiss goodbye in the morning, the chat with a friend, the Saturday soccer game—is what matters most." An observation from *The Washington Post*: "People seem to walk more slowly. They are off their brisk, self-important stride ... Motorists are driving better. They lay off their horns. They don't jump lights." From *The Dallas Morning News*: "Americans are ... experiencing a sort of 'cocooning of the heart,' cultural experts say. They're using this time to reconnect with their families and friends." From *The Oregonian*: "Get ready to hunker down ... Something deep inside has shifted."

A new term has entered the language: "layoff lust," the sudden desire to be sent away with a severance package, providing time at last to search for meaning and cultivate the soul. The food columns of *The New York Times* have for months been devoted to home-cooked comfort food that requires hours of slow, therapeutic preparation. ("The food is not really the thing," one writer explained. "It's the making of it that gets you through a bad time.") The Contemporary Simplicity Movement, a collection of grassroots study groups devoted to new visions of the good life, seems to be experiencing a surge of interest.

So the verdict seems to be decisive. And the verdict, I would argue, is incorrect. A longer view and a soberer assessment come from the historian Stephen Kern, the author of *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880–1918*, a study of the technology-induced revolution that forever altered notions of speed, distance, and the pace of social change. "The historical record is clear," Kern has stated. "The world has never opted to slow down."



During a period when Americans are supposed to be experiencing a "cocooning of the heart," one would expect to see, for example, a slump in the use of the Big Three prefixes: "mega," "hyper," and "power." Nothing of the kind has occurred. Articles have continued to cite the mega-farm, the mega-yacht, the mega-filibuster. They have pointed out the hypercapitalism of professional sports and discussed the emergence of the United States as the world's sole hyperpower. They have invoked the virtues of power yoga, power eating, power dating. The opposite of "hyper" is "hypo," and one might think that in a decelerating age its moment had finally arrived; but "hypo" is as scarce as ever. Nor has the idea of the Impotence Lunch taken hold.

If Americans really were beginning to slow down, the Contemporary Simplicity Movement would not be adding another meeting or two a month to our schedules. The antidote to a frenetic work life wouldn't be something called "power leisure." The attendant at Starbucks wouldn't give me a "tall" when I ask for a "small."

The celebration of the New Slowness may not reflect reality, but it surely does reflect some degree of yearning. Is there a role here for public policy? Social engineering, with its micro-management of everyday life, holds no appeal for a free people. Yet there may be a few bold steps we could take to get us on the path to fast-free living.

Backpacks. The task of slowing the

GREG CLARKE

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country down must begin with efforts aimed at prevention. A tendency toward what the anthropologist David Harvey has called "space-time compression" begins early, as an inspection of any schoolchild's backpack will reveal. These encumbrances typically have a capacity of one and a half cubic feet and hold loads of forty pounds. The contents, unpacked and spread out like a GI's battle kit, represent hyperachievement in microcosm. A simple yet revolutionary reform would be to decree that the capacity of school backpacks be reduced by two thirds.

Drive-thru windows. The whole point of these amenities is, of course, speed, and without some sort of intervention drive-thru service will only get faster. According to *The Futurist*, McDonald's will soon introduce e-mail billing at some of its drive-thru facilities in southern California. Other chains are experimenting with an E-Z Pass system, similar to the one used for bridge and highway tolls; a transponder in the car would permit purchases to be deducted automatically from prepaid accounts. One brutally effective way to counter this trend would be to insist that drive-thru windows be staffed exclusively by former employees of Friendly's or Sears—institutions that have held the line when it comes to speedy service. If there are any such personnel left over, they could be used to man the twenty-four-hour help-lines at ATMs.

Time zones. America's current time-zone system, with four zones spread across the continent, is an unrelenting source of heat under the national pressure cooker. Many people in the West must get up early because the East has already started doing business. Many people in the East must work late because the West is still on the job. Deciding that the entire country should be on Central Time would mean adjustments on the fringes—Atlantic mornings would always be a little brighter than they used to be, and Pacific mornings would always be a little darker. But having the entire country work from the same clock would restore a sense of coherence and stability. It might also lure people back to the temporal "normality" of the rapidly depopulating heartland, where life is slower anyway.

Electric light. Another issue related to biorhythms is the seemingly inexorable drift toward a 24/7 economy. The rule of thumb is that if anything can be done twenty-four hours a day, it will be; day-care centers and dentists' offices are now open at midnight. Almost by definition, the maintenance of basic diurnal rhythms is essential to a humane way of life. Political arithmetic may forever doom a significant rise in the gasoline tax, but what about levying a ten-cents-a-watt tax on light bulbs? One happy consequence might be a shift back to daytime baseball.

If we really were beginning to slow down, the Simplicity Movement would not be adding another meeting or two a month to our schedules. The antidote to a frenetic work life wouldn't be "power leisure."

Computer keyboards. Yes, computers have made many aspects of modern life more tolerable, enabling stupendous feats of calculation, storage, and management. But they are also an attractive nuisance, putting unimaginable amounts of sheer capability—to buy, to pry, to surf, to meddle—into the hands of people unaccustomed to its wise use. Shouldn't one have to cross some threshold of thought or resolve before exploiting such power? One way to raise the threshold would be to decide that every computer must have two separate keyboards—one with all the vowels and the other with all the consonants.

The measures outlined above would be a start. Should more impetus be needed, we could ban cup holders from cars, demand that breaking news be delivered only by mail, and add a ball and a strike to the standard at-bat. If Americans intend to take slowness seriously, they need to start picking up the pace.

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THE AGENDA

ESSAYS THIS MONTH *on the meaning of the next century, what affirmative action could learn from racial profiling, the recent outbreak of plagiarism, and more.*

DAVID BROOKS
"A survey of the social science of the past century shows it to be, by and large, an insanely pessimistic field." PAGE 20

RICHARD A. POSNER
"Not all unacknowledged copying is 'plagiarism' in the pejorative sense." PAGE 23

RANDALL KENNEDY
"Supporters of racial profiling who trumpet the urgency of communal needs when discussing law enforcement all of a sudden become fanatical individualists when condemning affirmative action." PAGE 24

WALTER RUSSELL MEAD
"The twentieth century taught Europeans and Americans different lessons. Europe learned that nationalism could lead to destruction; Americans learned that nationalism could bring safety and prosperity." PAGE 26

JAMES FALLOWS
"Both before and after September 11 [Rumsfeld] expressed to friends his exasperation with the hidebound nature of the services' leadership." PAGE 28

P. J. O'ROURKE
"When someone creates a system in which you can't tell whether or not you're being fooled, you're being fooled." PAGE 30

EAMONN FINGLETON
"Today, entirely unnoticed by the American public, the United States is in the grip of a new economic error." PAGE 32

THE AIR-POWER REVOLUTION

Historians and military analysts have long stressed the limitations of air power. Their arguments are no longer tenable

.....

In the war against terrorism, George W. Bush has said, the United States will, if deemed necessary, strike militarily against regimes considered threatening by reason of their nature, their pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, or their support of anti-American terrorist groups. In Iraq, it seems clear, the Bush Administration intends a full-fledged military effort to depose Saddam Hussein. A core objection to this new approach to the war is that it will fail—that the United States, largely acting alone, cannot wage and win such military campaigns as will be required without incurring expenses in life and money that the American public will not accept. This would have been true once, but it is no longer. The reason is the fruition of one of the great revolutions in military history: the revolution of air power.

COMMENT
MICHAEL KELLY

The ideal war is one in which the other side quits after a minimum of actual fighting. Accomplishing this comes down to scaring or starving—demoralizing the enemy, through displays of might or destruction, to the point where fighting seems useless, or destroying the enemy's supplies to the point where further fighting is effectively impossible. "Frightening your enemy is the fundamental and presumably the oldest weapon of war," Peter Calvocoressi, Guy Wint, and John Pritchard wrote in *Total War* (now *The Penguin History of the Second World War*).

> Starving him—hitting him where it hurts most—cannot be much less old ... Where earlier warriors rushed upon their foes with painted bodies and hideous screams, or poisoned wells and beleaguered towns, their more sophisticated though hardly more civilized successors rain high explosives on factories and homes and set fire to whole cities. Only the techniques and the scale are new.

For the first several decades of the twentieth century the most important tool in scaring and starving remained the warship, able to destroy coastal cities, deliver armies, and blockade nations. A powerful navy was vastly more powerful than a powerful army, and ultimately the only effective defense against a powerful navy was another powerful navy. When Theodore Roosevelt wished to announce that America had come of imperial age, he sent neither ambassadors nor armies around the world but the Great White Fleet. In dealing with the smaller and weaker nations, the visit of a single warship might quell trouble.

As World War II opened, naval power was still thought paramount, and the buildup to war had been also a buildup of navies. "At the end of 1938, the warship builders of the world were busier than at any date since the World War concluded," reported the 1939 *Britannica Book of the Year*. "Every state of importance is taking measures to increase its naval strength." At the opening of the war Britain, which had destroyed Napoleon's empire and built its own on the strength of its might at sea, had a navy more than equal to the navies of France, Germany, and Italy put together: eighteen battleships and pocket cruisers, ten aircraft carriers, fifteen heavy cruisers, sixty-two light cruisers, 205 destroyers, 121 lesser surface ships, and seventy submarines.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVE BRODNER

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But in Britain, and in all advanced nations, naval power was already passing as the generals' great hope. In 1921 Giulio Douhet, who had recently retired as chief of the aviation arm of the Italian army, published a book titled *The Command of the Air*. Douhet argued that air power was the secret to winning wars purely through fear and destruction of the enemy's assets. Through bombardment of the enemy's factories, infrastructure, and cities, he argued, a powerful and independent air force might by itself break the enemy's will to the point of forcing surrender.

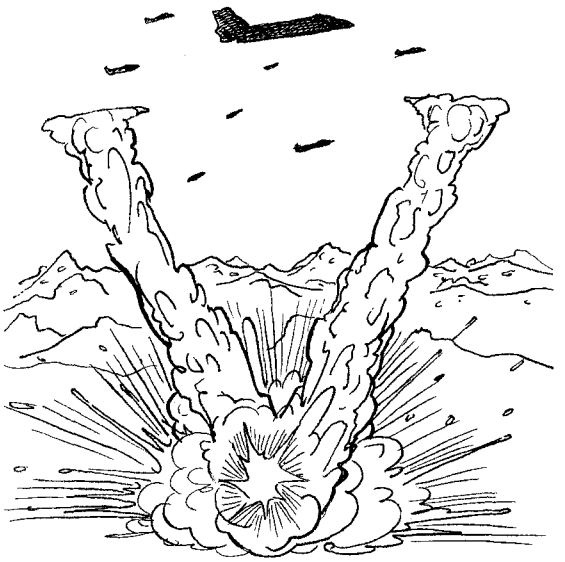
This struck most experts as dubious. In 1917 Britain's Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill, had rejected the airpower argument: "It is improbable that any terrorization of the civil population which could be achieved by air attack would compel ... surrender." But the extraordinary advances in aviation of the 1920s and 1930s increasingly won others to Douhet's side—notably General William Mitchell, of the U.S. Army, and Sir Hugh Trenchard, of the Royal Air Force. By the opening of World War II the advocates of air power had convinced themselves and others (including Churchill) that the new air power would prove not only a decisive development in war-making but an epochal one.

From *Total War*:

> The advent of air power had brought with it a school of theorists who alleged that this new weapon could contribute to war-making by doing something that had never been done before, and could do this independently and without the help of the older sea and land forces ... The prime aim of assailing industry, communications and morale was to compel the surrender of the enemy even though his armed forces had suffered no irreversible defeat in the field. Defeat in workshop and homestead was to take the place of defeat in the field as the first aim of strategy. This had been the aim of naval blockade, but no navy had ever succeeded in making a blockade more than an ancillary element in war-making ... If air power could succeed in these tasks, then the bomber aircraft would prove a truly revolutionary weapon.

But air power did not succeed in these tasks. Germany rested its (always doubtful) hopes for a successful invasion of Britain entirely on an air offensive (the Battle of Britain) that was intended to reduce a demoralized British people to surrender, or at least to destroy Britain's defenses against invasion. The Luftwaffe's campaign (including the Blitz) killed about 43,000 people but unified and strengthened British will rather than crushing it, and never came close to wrecking Britain's air defenses.

In air power's second great test failure was less absolute but more consequential in terms of future war-making. Britain's Bomber Command believed not only that bombing could win the war



but that *precision* bombing could win the war. The heavy bombers of the Royal Air Force would pulverize Germany's manufacturing, transportation, and communication networks—thereby forcing Germany's surrender without resorting to "area bombing," the saturation bombing of civilians and their homes. Thus bombing would win the war without the mass slaughter of noncombatants—a civilized victory, even a humanitarian victory.

Precision bombing proved markedly imprecise. In the first year of British bombing more than two thirds of the sorties failed to hit their targets. Even large targets, such as rail yards, could be hit only on moonlit nights. By the end of the first year the Bomber Command had admitted that precision bombing alone could not do the job (although later in the war inventions such as the British Pathfinder force and the American Norden bombsights made precision bombing much more precise), and Allied bombers turned increasingly to area bombing, which was to culminate in the horrors of Hamburg (45,400 dead), Dresden (50,000), Hiroshima (118,661), and Nagasaki (73,884). (Tallies are from *The Oxford Companion to World War II.*) Bombing could not produce victory except through civilian slaughter—unpalatable to people who wished to think of themselves as civilized.

Indeed, it seemed, bombing could not produce victory even at that price. The mass bombing of Germany did not crush the German will or destroy (although it certainly crippled) Germany's industrial capacity. And worse: bombing proved to be lethal not only to the bombed but to the bombers. Britain's Bomber Command lost almost 56,000 men in the war; American air forces, which engaged in high-risk daylight bombing, also lost almost that number.

So the verdict on air power at the end of World War II was this: (1) Precision bombing did not work; bombing necessarily was a brute and indiscriminate instrument, and the degree of bombing necessary to make a difference required the barbaric slaughter of civilians on a mass scale. (2) Not even bombing on the barbaric level could in itself suffice to horrify an enemy into surrender. (3) Even if such bombing could compel surrender, it still failed to deliver on the revolutionary promise of victory without the price of combat; bombing was just another form of combat—indeed, one with unusually high mortality rates. (4) Atomic bombing could deliver on air power's promise of victory through terror without combat, but it was so awful that no one ever wanted to use it again. War remained fundamentally a contest to be decided between fighters on the ground, and the generals' dream remained a dream.

Next month: Vietnam, the Gulf War, the Balkans, and Afghanistan—the revolution arrives

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LOOKING BACK ON TOMORROW

If the century ahead turns out to have a theme, what will it be?

.....

COMMENT

DAVID BROOKS

What are we going to do with our lives? I don't mean that question in any small, personal sense; whether or not you decide to retire early to open a bed-and-breakfast is of no interest to me. I mean it in the biggest sense. Which issues will dominate the twenty-first century? What debates and controversies will roil our children's lives? In other words, what will the twenty-first century be about?

If forced to sum up nineteenth-century America in one sentence, I'd say that it was about national union. The century opened with the Louisiana Purchase and continued with the acquisition and settling of the West. Then came efforts to link our vast space with networks of canals, railroads, towns, and telegraph wires. The Civil War was, of course, an all-out fight for political and cultural union. And the century ended with the consolidation of the national economy.

The twentieth century, in America and elsewhere, was about the size of government. The main debate was between those who wanted to preserve limited government and those who wanted a bigger and more active government, whether the latter were Progressives, New Deal liberals, democratic socialists, or totalitarians. Two of the great conflicts of the century, World War II and the Cold War, were fought against ideologies—fascism and communism, respectively—that held that the state should control economic and social life. In the United States election after election revolved around the question of small versus big government.

It is hard to believe that the debate about the right size of government will dominate the coming century. Most nations have reached a rough consensus on the matter. In the United States federal expenditures now equal about one fifth of GDP, as they have for many years; there is no sign that that figure will change much anytime soon. In 1993 Hillary Clinton tried to expand the scope of government by offering an enormous proposal to reform health care, and in 1995 the speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, tried to shrink it. Both failed. Democrats and Republicans still attack each other on the issue, but their fight has become a sort of petty trench warfare on familiar terrain, marked by tired arguments and no significant movement one way or the other.

Which project or controversy, then, will define the coming century? Here are a few nominees:

Remaking human nature. We are experiencing a biotechnological revolution. In his book *Life Script* (2001), Nicholas Wade, a science reporter for *The New York Times*, predicts that the revolution will wash over us in three overlapping waves. First will come what has been called individualized medicine. Doctors will match drugs to our specific genotypes and will even introduce "regenerative medicine": instead of fixing diseased organs, they will grow and implant new ones. The second wave will bring breakthroughs in gene therapy as it applies to reproduction. Fertilized eggs will be treated in vitro with selected genes to increase the future person's height or intelligence, for example, or to prevent depression or other illnesses. The result of these advances will be a third wave: a radical increase in how long people live. Wade suggests that we may eventually regard 320 years as a normal life-span.

Breakthroughs of this sort would certainly reduce disease and suffering. But they would also raise many doubts, which can be boiled down to two questions: Is there more to life than maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain? Do we improve our bodies at the cost of our souls?

Critics of the drive toward such technologies argue that we take on a terrible burden when we try to redesign human nature and human beings. Parents who try to implant "improvements" in their prospective children, they contend, will be perverting parenthood. They will be assessing their children in consumerist terms, not regarding them as intrinsically holy creations (see "Jack or Jill?," by Margaret Talbot, March *Atlantic*). And parenthood will become despotism as parents refuse to accept limits on their control over another human life.

Regarding the third wave of Wade's revolution, would a radically longer life necessarily be a better life? "Teach us to number our days," the Psalmist says, "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We seek to live according to God's word, the critics argue, precisely because we are aware that our time on earth is short.

The forces of science say that they are attempting to master nature in order to improve man's estate, in the spirit of the Baconian tradition. The forces of religion say that at some point the domination of the flesh becomes the death of the spirit.

Globalization. Before the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, most social scientists would have predicted that the economics and politics of globalization would dominate the twenty-first century. One of the classic texts in this debate is *The End of the Nation-State* (1995), by the French intellectual Jean-Marie Guéhenno. Guéhenno begins with the familiar argument that nations are too big to solve some problems and too small to solve others. However, he deepens the discussion when he writes that certain concepts associated with the nation-state, such as democracy, politics, and liberty, continue to define our horizons but no longer mean what they once did.

According to Guéhenno, power is now diffused to markets, multinational companies, and nongovernmental organizations. Geographic space has become less important. The world will soon consist of a number of overlapping networks, with a "universal empire" that contains them all (think of the interlocking rings of the Olympic symbol). No single power structure will be able to exercise all the dimensions of sovereignty, which will instead be fluid and open.

This basic idea has been fleshed out and endorsed or condemned in dozens of books. One left-wing critique

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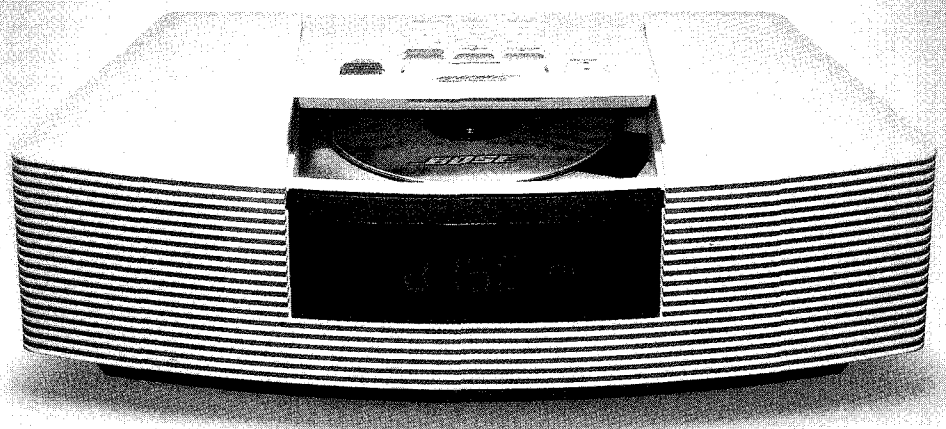

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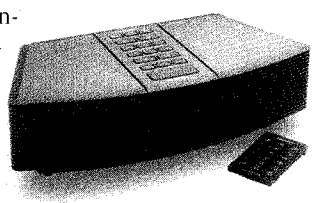

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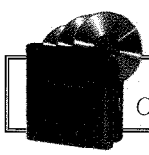

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is Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2000), which has attracted a cult following—in part, one suspects, because it is written in the obscure style that is taken in certain academic circles as a sign of oracular brilliance. Another book is Paul A. Cantor's *Gilligan Unbound* (2001). Using television shows of the past several decades, from *Star Trek* to *The Simpsons*, Cantor argues that globalization has washed away certain basic assumptions. People no longer assume that they live in a world of centrally directed nation-states, which may eventually converge into a single global authority. They no longer assume that politics reigns over commerce. Instead, authority is decentralized. The world is no longer a coherent place that we can shape; rather, the shadowy force of globalization exerts its will on us.

Should we fight to preserve our system of nation-states or embrace the post-national future? If we are no longer defined by our national identities, do we fall back on racial or religious identities, or do we invent new ones? And what about this notion of a global "empire"? Will such an empire be just? Or will it be a machine that runs by itself, crushing human beings in its gears?

Inequality. In the early 1990s a story floated around Russia about a Japanese steel executive who was invited to tour a Russian steel plant. The Russians took him around, showed him their machines and processes, and then asked him, "How far behind you are we? Are we five years behind, or ten?" The Japanese executive responded, "Forever. You are forever behind." He meant that the Russian plant was not only backward but also falling further behind every year, because its rate of progress was slower than that of those ahead of it.

A similar dynamic could prove to be a feature of the information age. The rich countries and people may not only maintain their lead but also increase it year after year, because they are better equipped to take advantage of fresh opportunities. This widening inequality occurs in both international and domestic realms. The European and Asian tiger nations could roar ahead of the rest of the world, leaving behind whole continents in poverty and disorder, which would inevitably lead to shame and rebellion among those left behind. The historian Bernard Lewis has argued persuasively, in these pages and elsewhere, that such a sense of failure has helped to fuel the anti-Western radicalism that has swept through the Muslim world and endangered our own.

Within many nations the gap between those in the top income decile and those in the bottom appears to be widening. This has been happening in the United States, Germany, Britain, and Japan, regardless of what sort of political party or philosophy holds sway. If widening inequality is inherent in the structure of the information-age economy, will nasty class warfare necessarily follow? Or will the people lagging behind, who will form a majority, eventually come up with their own economic system—some updated neo-Marxist vision, perhaps—to replace democratic capitalism and its perceived unfairness?

The American Century redux. On the other hand, why be so gloomy? Perhaps the United States will emerge from the war on terrorism more powerful and influential than before. Perhaps it will continue the task that occupied it for so much of the twentieth century: spreading the gospel of the Declaration of Independence—the idea that all human beings (and not just a few lucky ones in North America and Western Europe) are born with certain unalienable rights.

Perhaps over the coming decades democracy and freedom will take root in Africa, in the Middle East, in China. Already it is striking that many people in the former Soviet Union and the Arab world say they just want their countries to be "normal"—by which they mean contented, bourgeois nations, in which politics is a series of compromises, religious tolerance is the rule, and shopping is a prime leisure activity. They have internalized our Founders' vision.

A survey of the social science of the past century shows it to be, by and large, an insanely pessimistic field. Intellectuals are always predicting decline. So perhaps it's time to try to compensate for our tendency to see problems instead of progress. To achieve a new American Century the United States would have to solve some of its problems—for example, how to preserve our distinctive identity even as our nation is demographically transformed; how to retain our character and sense of national mission in the face of mass affluence and commercial pressures; how to remain a dynamic economic power. American leaders will have to rebut dour standpatters, including the professor of government Samuel Huntington, who argues that civilizations are practically inviolable and that Western civilization should generally not try to project its image of right and wrong onto others' turf. But the task of championing democracy has never been easy. And it is not unrealistic to think that the United States will continue on the trajectory that it followed in the past two centuries, and that this will have positive, world-shaping effects.

There are, of course, many other issues that could dominate the coming years: global warming, the global spread of feminism, a worldwide religious revival, a militant secular revival, ethnic balkanization. But these four are my finalists. And I'm betting that issue No. 4—the American Century redux—will emerge at the top of the list.

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ON PLAGIARISM

In the wake of recent scandals some distinctions are in order

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COMMENT

RICHARD A. POSNER

Recently two popular historians were discovered to have lifted passages from other historians' books. They identified the sources in footnotes, but they failed to place quotation marks around the purloined passages. Both historians were quickly buried under an avalanche of criticism. The scandal will soon be forgotten, but it leaves in its wake the questions What is "plagiarism"? and Why is it reprobated? These are important questions. The label "plagiarist" can ruin a writer, destroy a scholarly career, blast a politician's chances for election, and cause the expulsion of a student from a college or university. New computer search programs, though they may in the long run deter plagiarism, will in the short run lead to the discovery of more cases of it.

We must distinguish in the first place between a plagiarist and a copyright infringer. They are both copycats, but the latter is trying to appropriate revenues generated by property that belongs to someone else—namely, the holder of the copyright on the work that the infringer has copied. A pirated edition of a current best seller is a good example of copyright infringement. There is no copyright infringement, however, if the "stolen" intellectual property is in the public domain (in which case it is not property at all), or if the purpose is not appropriation of the copyright holder's revenue. The doctrine of "fair use" permits brief passages from a book to be quoted in a book review or a critical essay; and the parodist of a copyrighted work is permitted to copy as much of that work as is necessary to enable readers to recognize the new work as a parody. A writer may, for that matter, quote a passage from another writer just to liven up the narrative; but to do so without quotation marks—to pass off another writer's writing as one's own—is more like fraud than like fair use.

"Plagiarism," in the broadest sense of this ambiguous term, is simply unacknowledged copying, whether of copyrighted or uncopyrighted work. (Indeed, it might be of uncopyrightable work—for example, of an idea.) If I reprint *Hamlet* under my own name, I am a plagiarist but not an infringer. Shakespeare himself was a formidable plagiarist in the broad sense in which I'm using the word. The famous description in *Antony and Cleopatra* of Cleopatra on her royal barge is taken almost verbatim from a translation of Plutarch's life of Mark Antony: "on either side of her, pretty, fair boys apparelled as painters do set forth the god Cupid, with little fans in their hands, with which they fanned wind upon her" becomes "on each side her / Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids, / With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem / To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool." (Notice how Shakespeare improved upon the original.) In *The Waste Land*, T. S. Eliot "stole" the famous opening of Shakespeare's barge passage, "The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne, / Burn'd on the water" becoming "The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne, / Glowed on the marble."

Mention of Shakespeare brings to mind that *West Side Story* is just one of the links in a chain of plagiarisms that began with Ovid's Pyramus and Thisbe and continued with the forgotten Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, which was plundered heavily by Shakespeare. Milton in *Paradise Lost* plagiarized Genesis, as did Thomas Mann in *Joseph and His Brothers*. Examples are not limited to writing. One from painting is Edouard Manet, whose works from the 1860s "quote" extensively from Raphael, Titian, Velásquez, Rembrandt, and others, of course without express acknowledgment.

If these are examples of plagiarism, then we want more plagiarism. They show that not all unacknowledged copying is "plagiarism" in the pejorative sense. Although there is no formal acknowledgment of copying in my examples, neither is there any likelihood of deception. And the copier has added value to the original—this is not slavish copying. Plagiarism is also innocent when no value is attached to originality; so judges, who try to conceal originality and pretend that their decisions are foreordained, "steal" freely from one another without attribution or any ill will.

But all that can be said in defense of a writer who, merely to spice up his work, incorporates passages from another writer without acknowledgment is that the readability of his work might be impaired if he had to interrupt a fast-paced narrative to confess that "a predecessor of mine, ___, has said what I want to say next better than I can, so rather than paraphrase him, I give you the following passage, indented and in quotation marks, from his book ___." And not even that much can be said in defense of the writer who plagiarizes out of sheer laziness or forgetfulness, the latter being the standard defense when one is confronted with proof of one's plagiarism.

Because a footnote does not signal verbatim incorporation of material from the source footnoted, all that can be said in defense of the historians with whom I began is that they made it easier for their plagiarism to be discovered. This is relevant to how severely they should be criticized, because one of the reasons academic plagiarism is so strongly reprobated is that it is normally very difficult to detect. (In contrast, Eliot and Manet *wanted* their audience to recognize their borrowings.) This is true of the student's plagiarized term paper, and to a lesser extent of the professor's plagiarized scholarly article. These are particularly grave forms of fraud, because they may lead the reader to take steps, such as giving the student a good grade or voting to promote the professor, that he would not take if he knew the truth. But readers of popular histories are not professional historians, and most don't care a straw how original the historian is. The public wants a good read, a good show, and the fact that a book or a play may be the work of many hands—as, in truth, most art and entertainment are—is of no consequence to it. The harm is not to the reader but to those writers whose work does not glitter with stolen gold.

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BLIND SPOT

Racial profiling, meet your alter ego: affirmative action

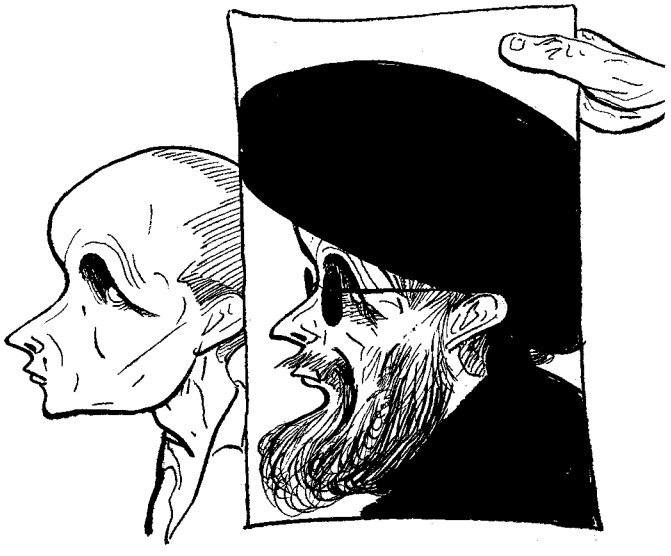
COMMENT

RANDALL KENNEDY

What is one to think about "racial profiling"? Confusion abounds about what the term even means. It should be defined as the policy or practice of using race as a factor in selecting whom to place under special surveillance: if police officers at an airport decide to search Passenger A because he is twenty-five to forty years old, bought a first-class ticket with cash, is flying cross-country, and is apparently of Arab ancestry, Passenger A has been subjected to racial profiling. But officials often prefer to define racial profiling as being based *solely* on race; and in doing so they are often seeking to preserve their authority to act against a person *partly* on the basis of race. Civil-rights activists, too, often define racial profiling as solely race-based; but their aim is to arouse their followers and to portray law-enforcement officials in as menacing a light as possible.

The problem with defining racial profiling in the narrow manner of these strange bedfellows is that doing so obfuscates the real issue confronting Americans. Exceedingly few police officers, airport screeners, or other authorities charged with the task of foiling or apprehending criminals act solely on the basis of race. Many, however, act on the basis of intuition, using race along with other indicators (sex, age, patterns of past conduct) as a guide. The difficult question, then, is not whether the authorities ought to be allowed to act against individuals on the basis of race alone; almost everyone would disapprove of that. The difficult question is whether they ought to be allowed to use race *at all* in schemes of surveillance. If, indeed, it is used, the action amounts to racial discrimination. The extent of the discrimination may be relatively small when race is only one factor among many, but even a little racial discrimination should require lots of justification.

The key argument in favor of racial profiling, essentially, is that taking race into account enables the authorities to screen carefully and at less expense those sectors of the population that are more likely than others to contain the criminals for whom officials are searching. Proponents of this theory stress that resources for surveillance are scarce, that the dangers to be avoided are grave, and that reducing these dangers helps everyone—including, sometimes especially, those in the groups subjected to special scrutiny. Proponents also assert that it makes good sense to consider whiteness if the search is for Ku Klux Klan assassins, blackness if the search is for drug couriers in certain locales, and Arab nationality or ethnicity if the search is for agents of al Qaeda.



Some commentators embrace this position as if it were unassailable, but under U.S. law racial discrimination backed by state power is presumptively illicit. This means that supporters of racial profiling carry a heavy burden of persuasion. Opponents rightly argue, however, that not much rigorous empirical proof supports the idea of racial profiling as an effective tool of law enforcement. Opponents rightly contend, also, that alternatives to racial profiling have not been much studied or pursued. Stressing that racial profiling generates clear harm (for example, the fear, resentment, and alienation felt by innocent people in the profiled group), opponents of racial profiling sensibly question whether compromising our hard-earned principle of anti-discrimination is worth merely speculative gains in overall security.

A notable feature of this conflict is that champions of each position frequently embrace rhetoric, attitudes, and value systems that are completely at odds with those they adopt when confronting another controversial instance of racial discrimination—namely, affirmative action. Vocal supporters of racial profiling who trumpet the urgency of communal needs when discussing law enforcement all of a sudden become fanatical individualists when condemning affirmative action in college admissions and the labor market. Supporters of profiling, who are willing to impose what amounts to a racial tax on profiled groups, denounce as betrayals of "color blindness" programs that require racial diversity. A similar turnabout can be seen on the part of many of those who support affirmative action. Impatient with talk of communal needs in assessing racial profiling, they very often have no difficulty with subordinating the interests of individual white candidates to the purported good of the whole. Opposed to race consciousness in policing, they demand race consciousness in deciding whom to admit to college or select for a job.

The racial-profiling controversy—like the conflict over affirmative action—will not end soon. For one thing, in both cases many of the contestants are animated by decent but contending sentiments. Although exasperating, this is actually good for our society; and it would be even better if participants in the debates acknowledged the simple truth that their adversaries have something useful to say.

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THE CASE AGAINST EUROPE

The very things that Europeans think make their political judgment better than Americans' actually make it worse

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COMMENT

WALTER RUSSELL MEAD

The United States is too unilateralist, too religious, too warlike, too laissez-faire, too fond of guns and the death penalty, and too addicted to simple solutions for complex problems. So goes the European indictment of American society, and much of the U.S. foreign-policy elite accepts it at something close to face value. But populist nationalists—Jacksonian Americans, that is—don't.

The twentieth century taught Europeans and Americans different lessons. Europe learned that nationalism could lead to destruction; Americans learned that nationalism could bring safety and prosperity. Europe learned that bureaucratic welfare states and powerful trade unions were the only alternatives to bitter class warfare; Americans learned that government and unions were, at best, necessary evils. Europe learned that Christianity was an exhausted religion that could play no serious part in the contemporary world; Americans learned that personal religious faith was more necessary than ever.

One result is that the United States today is a much more traditional society than Europe. Especially in the "red" states, most of us still believe in God, the family, the flag, and the death penalty. Jacksonians neither trust nor take seriously anybody who doesn't believe in these things. Europeans think that anybody who believes all that crap is too stupid to make good decisions.

Jacksonians don't think about Europe much, except as a vacation destination. Our universities have increasingly moved away from teaching young Americans about European culture and, especially, history; Americans can go for weeks, months, and even years without feeling that European culture, military power, or economic developments have any impact at all on their lives. Europeans think about America all the time. American culture and military power are constant facts of life for them.

When Jacksonian America does think about Europe, it sees what Sheriff Andy of Mayberry saw in Barney Fife—a scrawny, neurotic deputy whose good heart was overshadowed by bad judgment and vanity. The slow-talking, solid Andy tolerated Barney just fine, but he knew that Barney's self-importance would get him into one humiliating scrape after another.

Europe hopes for a world role more or less equal to that of the United States. Jacksonians roll their eyes. Jacksonians think that Europe—with a declining and aging population and an economy likely to grow more slowly than most of the economies of the developing world, to say nothing of the United States'—is likely to continue to lose influence.

Europe's military thinking seems particularly unrealistic. Burdened with colossal welfare costs and pension problems that far outstrip anything the United States faces, European countries can't and won't make the investments needed to develop a significant military presence in the foreseeable future. Even if they spent the money, the major European countries—except possibly Britain—are not very warlike. Europeans think of themselves as mature and evolved. Jacksonians think of them as yellow.

Barney Fife was always looking for new jobs for himself around the station house—new roles, as European politicians would say. European hopes revolve around somehow getting to play global Mom to America's global Dad—getting to be the moderate, kindly half of the global-power couple. When Dad sends Iran to its room without any supper, Mom wants to sneak upstairs with milk and cookies. For this she expects both Dad and Iran to thank her.

Jacksonians think this approach won't get Europe very far. America and the Third World don't need an intermediary. Developing countries want to talk to the people who make the decisions.

Moreover, Jacksonians (and not only Jacksonians) think that for Europeans to believe they have a more sophisticated knowledge of the Third World than Americans do is as silly as Barney's thinking he would make a better sheriff than Andy. Europe's vaunted "experience" in the Third World generally has roots in the old colonial empires. When the Europeans pulled out, they left huge messes and deep hatreds behind them: India and Pakistan, Israel and Palestine, Tutsi and Hutu. In business, academics, politics, and military matters U.S. links with the developing world today generally match anything Europe can offer.

Americans just don't trust Europe's political judgment. Appeasement is its second nature. Europeans have never met a ruler—Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Qaddafi, Khomeini, Saddam Hussein—they didn't think could be softened up by concessions. Europeans tell Americans that in response to September 11 they should deal with the "root causes" of Muslim anger. Jacksonians see this as a call to pay Danegeld—to let the world know that if some people don't like our foreign policy, all they have to do is kill a few thousand American civilians and we will try harder to please them. Europeans think this is statesmanship. Jacksonians think it's pathetic.

Barney thinks Andy doesn't pay him enough attention. That's going to get worse. The twenty-first century will see the United States paying less and less attention to Europe as compared with other parts of the world. Because Europe is relatively stable politically and economically, it matters less to the United States than other, more volatile regions. We have more to hope for and to fear from, say, China and Mexico than Europe.

In a rational world this would not create resentment in Europe. Unfortunately, Europe's seemingly inbred, unshakable faith in its superiority reminds Americans of Wile E. Coyote, in the Road Runner cartoons. The coyote is convinced that he is smarter than Road Runner. He builds one intricate Road Runner catcher after another—machines that Road Runner is incapable of understanding, much less of duplicating. True, the coyote never quite catches Road Runner; but this has no impact whatsoever on the coyote's self-esteem. "Wile E. Coyote, Genius," says the mailbox outside his home. To which Jacksonian America says, "Beep Beep!"

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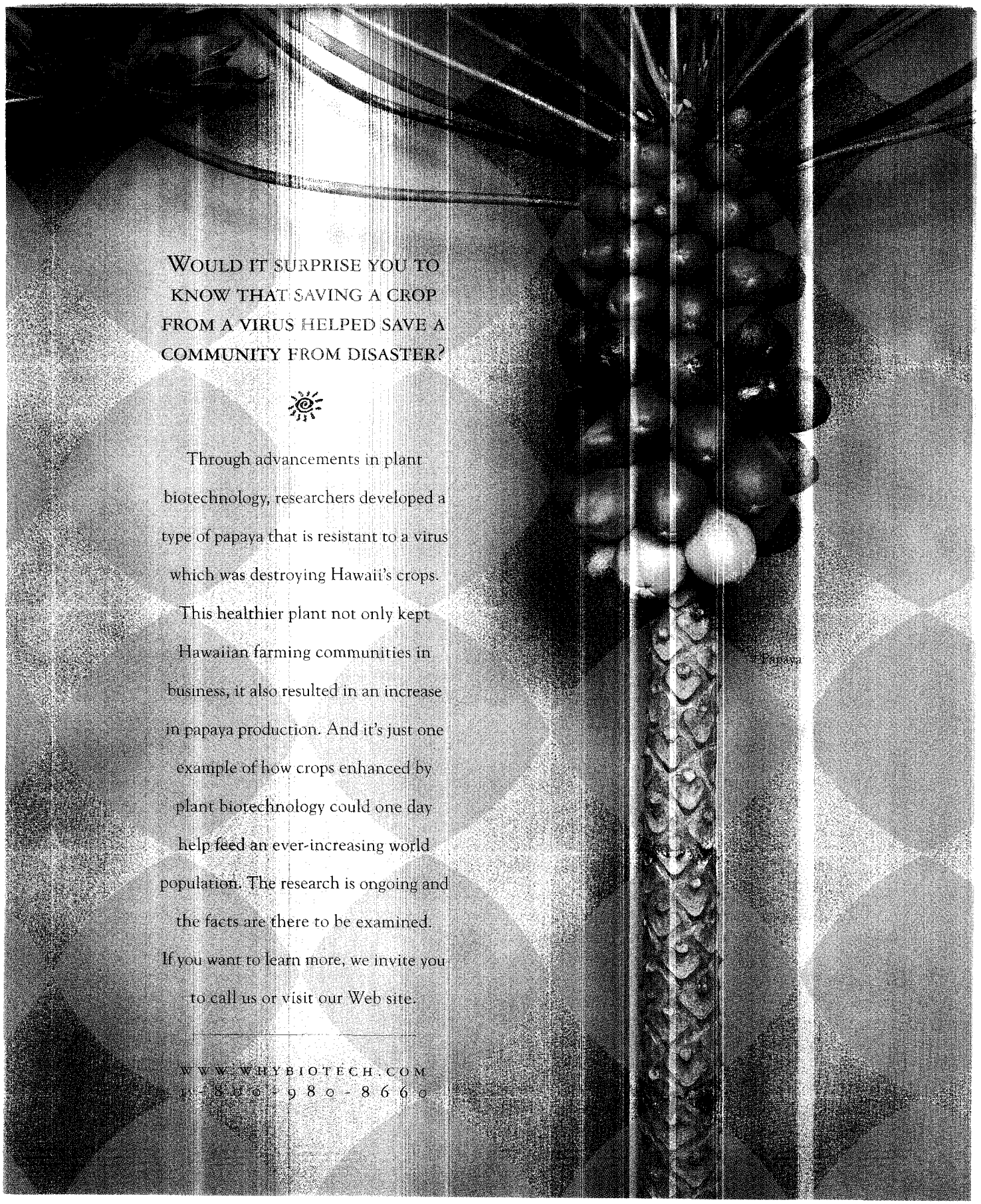

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BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

Soon after the Afghan war began, the Air Force dramatically altered its tactics. What lay behind the change?

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WASHINGTON DESK

JAMES FALLOWS

When fighting begins, military establishments are nearly as eager to observe and record the results as to win. This emphasis is natural, since claims about what did and didn't work may be used for decades afterward to settle arguments, justify new weapons, and affect military doctrine. Long before the first bombs were dropped on Afghanistan, some of the Pentagon's official historians had been invited into the building to observe the proceedings.

The process of interpreting battlefield results can be surprisingly slow. William S. Lind, a military analyst, has observed that it took several years after the end of the Gulf War for the American public to realize that much of Iraq's Republican Guard had escaped. The full answers about the first stage of this war, the battle against the Taliban, may take as long to emerge as the Bush Administration says the war on terrorism will last—again, years. But it is already clear what one significant question will be: Why did the Air Force change its approach so dramatically in the early days of the war?

That there was a change is obvious. Last October the Air Force for a week or two followed what had been its classic twentieth-century doctrine of "strategic bombing." A strategic air campaign is intended to weaken an enemy's military force indirectly, by attacking its underpinnings, rather than directly, by attacking the force itself. Therefore the United States blew up airfields, attacked radar sites, and destroyed such command-and-control centers as it could find.

By late October the bombing campaign had been retooled as something more like "close air support." This is the Army's term for what it thinks the Air Force never wants to provide, in which bombers and attack planes serve as a kind of mobile artillery, aiming right at the enemy soldiers and tanks. This kind of attack requires more flexibility and faster response times than strategic bombing does; targets may change minute by minute, rather than being picked days in advance. It also requires closer coordination between air and ground forces, and in effect makes the Air Force an adjunct of the Army. The ground soldiers are the ones choosing the targets, and the pilots are supposed to respond right away.

By late October news accounts were referring to air attacks on the Taliban as being directed by Army Special Forces soldiers plus paramilitary agents from the CIA working with Northern Alliance ground troops. At this point the war against the Taliban became a rout. With guidance from the ground, Air Force planes could drive Taliban soldiers out of protected positions, destroy their tanks and equipment once they were on the move, and quickly make it impossible for them to fight on.

The question is why the Air Force started behaving this way. It would be nice if the answer were, simply, Because it made military sense. But in previous battles coordinating ground and air efforts took much longer than this. In a number of recent interviews I found no one who was sure of the explanation, but I identified two main hypotheses.

One view, favored in the Air Force, is that this new collaboration between air and ground forces was a natural response to the arrival of new technology—specifically, reliable precision-guided weapons. American ground troops could use sighting devices to get the exact coordinates of a target as small as a tank; bombs with the highly reliable and relatively cheap JDAM ("joint direct attack munition") guidance system could use those coordinates to follow the target through wind, smoke, and cloud.

"No one expected [this combined approach] to work out as well as it did," a retired Air Force officer told me. "No one in the Air Force, and no one in the Army. We've had the ability for quite some time. But we never practiced having a sergeant on the ground get a B-52 to attack a target from thirty-five thousand feet." One reason this was never practiced, he told me, was that "the possibilities for error are unlimited." Indeed, the first major "friendly fire" episode in the war, in which five Special Forces soldiers were injured and five Northern Alliance soldiers were killed by an American JDAM bomb, resulted from a targeting error. The spotters relaying the target's coordinates to the bomber circling overhead mistakenly sent the coordinates of their own location. But this was the exception. The Air Force man continued, "They got real good at it, the green-suiters [in the Army] and the blue-suiters [in the Air Force]. Instead of hitting a cave and having nothing happen, you'd hit a cave and Taliban would come streaming out. It was inconceivable just a little time earlier that they could work that closely together."

A less uplifting interpretation of this view is that the Air Force began cooperating with the Army because in doing so it could outflank the Navy. During the first two weeks of bombing the Air Force's presence was mainly big bombers operating from miles up. This fit the strategic-bombing doctrine and also fit local realities, because there were no nearby bases from which Air Force fighter or ground-attack planes could operate. But it left the tactical role—for fighter and attack aircraft—to naval planes operating from carriers. Past conflicts would lead to the natural assumption that these more agile aircraft, operating closer to the ground, would do the precision-bombing work. By showing that its old, lumbering bombers could hit tanks and troops with the help of spotters, the Air Force created a new role for itself.

The other main view is that the Air Force was neither discovering how to cooperate with the Army nor seeing that it could match the Navy's role. Instead it was responding to direct orders to change its behavior, presumably issued by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. The evidence here is circumstantial. Until September 10 Rumsfeld was described as embattled within the Pentagon, because of his impatience with bureaucratic gamesmanship and inter-

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service jockeying. Both before and after September 11 he expressed to friends his exasperation with the hidebound nature of the services' leadership. In the first two weeks of the war, according to this view, he saw the real-world harm caused by the attitudes he had spent months complaining about.

One retired Army officer describes the first stage of the war as having been conducted "stovepipe" fashion, with separate chains of command for each service. The ground forces would relay their observations and targeting requests up the pipe to the senior Army command. The Army commanders would relay the requests to senior Air Force officials, who would pass word down to the bomber crews. Hours or days after the original request, bombs would fall where targets might no longer be.

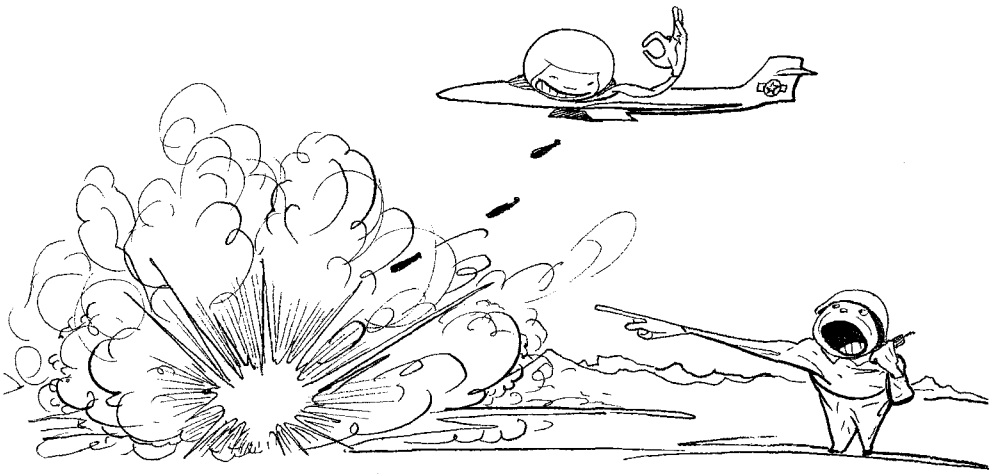
It would be in keeping with Rumsfeld's personality and record to order the Air Force and the Army to stop fooling around and start hitting targets. If the campaign in Afghanistan continues to be viewed as a success, many people will claim credit for the crucial change in policy. As long as the military applies the concept of fast coordinated campaigns, the parentage of the idea may not matter. Still, I would like to find out what it was.

Of course, it is possible that the campaign will not lastingly be seen as such a victory. William Lind, the military analyst, and G. I. Wilson, a colonel in the Marines, deserve a hearing on this point, because they have been prescient before. For instance, in a book chapter written with Marine Corps Major John Schmitt last summer, two months before the terrorist attacks, they said, "Arguably the most serious direct and immediate threat to U.S. national security today is not another state, rogue or otherwise, but the transnational terrorist organization Al Qa'ida."

Lind and Wilson and three coauthors had warned in an influential 1989 *Marine Corps Gazette* article that the United States would be vexed in the future by enemies that avoided attacking our big, well-equipped military and went straight for our cities and economic base. We would be all the more frustrated in attempting to respond, they said, because the American military knows everything about fighting other countries and armies but not about fighting enemies that are separate from any state. To the authors' chagrin, in February an Internet magazine that claims to represent al Qaeda cited that article as having helped to give the terrorists their insight that a "new type of war presents significant difficulties for the Western war machine."

French dream," he said, referring to France's interwar theory that war could be reduced to forward observers and artillery. The reason it worked in Afghanistan, he said, is that the Taliban had alienated most of the population, so spotters could travel easily. "There are not a lot of situations like that," he told me. "If the population is hostile, your little team has a very short shelf life."

Wilson said that if he were writing the 1989 paper today, he would emphasize the sheer economic impact terrorist attacks can have. "Look at all the money and energy we're tying up trying to improve airport security," he said. "I would also have focused more on the ways in which the basic institutions in our society can be turned into vehicles for destruction." Wilson sounded as if he had been more surprised by the anthrax scare, with its devastating effect on the postal service and the businesses that rely on it, than by the September 11 attacks. "I wish I had focused more," he said, "on the way one lone individual, a Kaczynski type of guy, can leverage our institutions and systems against us."



I recently asked Lind and Wilson what they made of the war so far. Each emphasized how little was known for sure and how wrong any given interpretation could be. That said, they went on to sound a distinctly non-triumphal note. Lind warned that vanquishing the Taliban, however satisfying, probably accomplished less in the long run than we thought. "When the Taliban had a state, we were able to fight it," he wrote recently, in an unpublished paper that he showed me.

> But its essence was never being a state, much less having facilities we could blow up with missiles. The Taliban was a movement, a non-state actor made up of people with a shared world-view ... Those people have not been killed, nor taken prisoner (with a very few exceptions), nor driven out. They are in Afghanistan, waiting ... And, now that the Taliban is not a state, we cannot fight it.

He was also highly skeptical that the spotter-bomber combination that worked so well in Afghanistan would make much difference anywhere else. "It's what I might call the ultimate

On only one point did Lind and Wilson line up with the Pentagon officials celebrating success in Afghanistan: technology provides new possibilities in conflict. But ideas and behavior, Lind and Wilson emphasized, are still more important than machines—the terrorists' idea of turning airliners into weapons; the U.S. military's idea, whatever its origin, that B-52s could be directed by soldiers on the ground. This war of ideas may be just beginning.

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HOW TO STUFF A WILD ENRON

Everyone blames too little regulation for the Enron mess, but maybe the culprit was too much

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AT LARGE

P. J. O'ROURKE

Beyond a certain point complexity *is* fraud. It's the Airline Ticket Price Axiom. Am I getting the best deal on my airline ticket? How could I know? To map the labyrinth of airline-ticket pricing structure I would have to spend a greater value in time, at the minimum-wage billing rate, than the value of the money I'd save. Or it's the Finnegans Wake Postulate. We all know that Joyce, the old soak, was just scribbling a learned version of what Jack Nicholson typed in *The Shining*.

Maybe "complexity is fraud" doesn't apply to mathematics or the physical sciences. Nevertheless, when someone creates a system in which you can't tell whether or not you're being fooled, you're being fooled. This is true in the intellectual food chain from the fine arts, literature, and sociology on down.

And Enron was pretty far down—down there among the cunning weasels of ratiocination. What Enron was doing, what caused investors to embrace it in a rapture of baffled awe, was hiding debt. Several friends of mine who work in finance tried to give me a simplified model of the kind of thing Enron would do: Enron would have some business in which it had invested a lot of money. But that business wasn't making a profit. Enron would form a partnership with outside investors. The partnership would buy the business. But almost all the money to buy the business would be lent to the partnership by Enron, usually in the form of stock. Enron would count the sale of that business as income and count the loan to the partnership as an asset. The unprofitable business would disappear from Enron's financial statement, because under accounting conventions, if a mere three percent of capital is brought into a partnership from outside a corporation, then the corporation doesn't have to carry that partnership on its books. Enron's liabilities were turned into black ink.

Enron engendered these partnerships with wild fecundity and in many variations; but some of the most important of them, to stay vital, depended on a high market price for Enron stock. Meanwhile, Arthur Andersen auditors were standing by reciting the only joke that makes accountants laugh: "Q. What's two minus two? A. Whatever the client wants it to be."

I've got to hurry and hire Arthur Andersen before everyone in the firm gets sent up the river to Club Fed. I'm going to tell my new accountants, "I had this expensive divorce. But I figure you can list it as an asset. Because, believe me, no matter what that divorce cost, it was *worth* it."

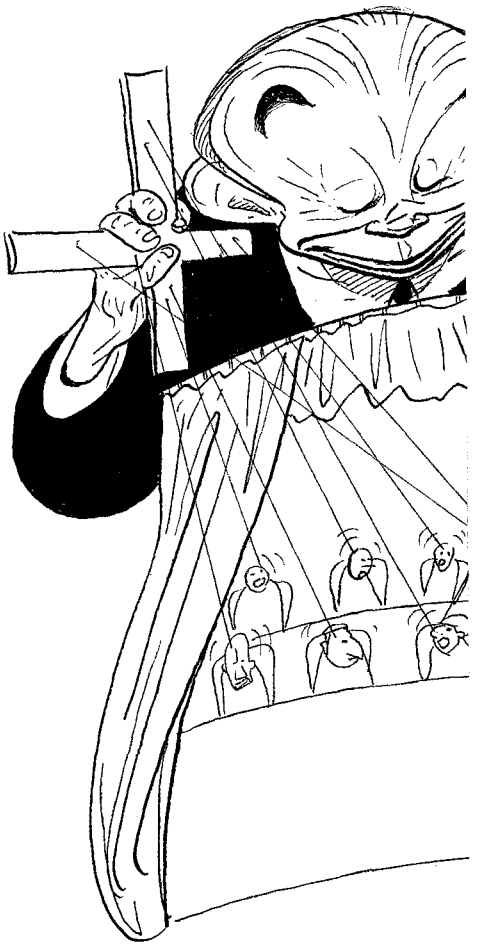
Enron was, by the common if not by the legal definition, defrauding the people who bought its stock. Is there something in the American capitalist system that encourages such fraud? Yes: the regulations against it. Generally accepted accounting principles consist of 144 standards, each requiring a volume of explication. Title 17 of the Code of Federal Regulations, covering commodity and securities exchanges, is 2,330 pages long. Federal tax law runs to 3,778 pages, with an additional 12,888 pages of IRS tax code regulations.

There are plenty of places to hide in this vast briar patch of dos and don'ts. Enron broke the rules of ethics. But the corporation's worst sins seem to have been lawful: the Gordian partnership ties, the tales of profit and growth enhanced for dramatic effect, the taxes avoided by sending revenues on vacation to the Cayman Islands, the freezing of employee 401(k)s in the ice-cube tray of the company's own stock, the auditing firm with about half its Enron fees gained from provision of other accounting services, so that Arthur Andersen accountants were cooking the very books that Arthur Andersen auditors were expected to swallow. And so on. According to *The Economist*, even Kenneth Lay's eleventh-hour stock sales may not have violated SEC regulations, because Lay was selling the stock to repay personal loans from the corporation; hence insider-trading restrictions did not (for reasons known only to someone who reads and marks with Hi-Liter pens all 2,330 pages of Title 17) apply.

Enron was supposed to be a supporter of marketplace deregulation. In a January 21 *Newsweek* article, "Who Killed Enron?," Allan Sloan wrote,

> At a dinner I had with [the former Enron CEO Jeffrey] Skilling in the late 1990s, he was like a religious zealot who couldn't stop repeating his favorite mantra ... There are rolling blackouts in the Midwest? Deregulate. Some energy companies look like they're price gouging? Deregulate more. And if salad dressing had dripped onto my tie? ... You get the picture.

But Jerry Taylor, the director of natural-resource studies at the Cato Institute (which *really* favors deregulation), points out that Enron lobbied for strict price controls on rates charged



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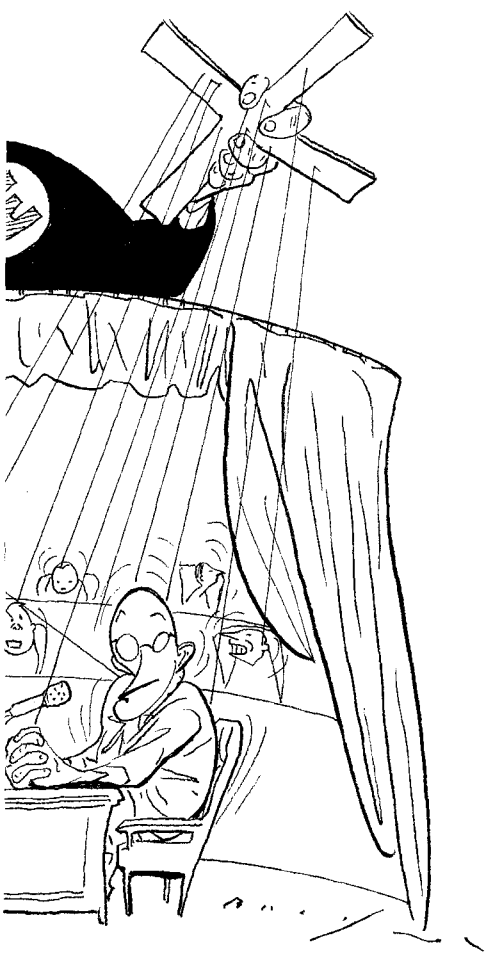
for access to power grids. Except when Enron lobbied otherwise, in places such as Texas and Louisiana, where Enron had bought those power grids. Then legislators were urged to let grid owners do what they liked. Bill Keller, the author of a January 26 *New York Times* column titled "Enron for Dummies," wrote, "Enron believed in reducing regulation of Enron."

And so believes every other regulated industry. This is why regulated industries set out to "capture" their regulatory bodies. Usually the tranquilizer guns and large nets work well. On the front page of the January 28 *Wall Street Journal* a headline read "FEDERAL REGULATOR OFTEN HELPS BANKS FIGHTING CONSUMERS."

The Cato Institute's president, Ed Crane, calls generally accepted accounting principles "skewed in favor of management, not investors." Of course they are. Enron's management paid Arthur Andersen $25 million in auditing fees in 2000. I paid H&R Block $80. The SEC allows an astonishing conflict of interest in large financial-services firms that can make fortunes doing investment banking for corporations and then make more fortunes advising me to buy stock in those corporations and taking a commission when I do. The so-called Chinese wall between the two sides of the business is as effective as the one that Genghis Khan walked through the gates of in the thirteenth century. Enron stock reached a high of $90.75 in August of 2000. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, only one Wall Street analyst put a "sell" recommendation on it before the price fell below $10. And this despite a damning article in the March 5, 2001, *Fortune* (when Enron stock was trading at $70) by Bethany McLean, who called Enron's business activities "impenetrable to outsiders" and "mind-numbingly complex" and said, "As for the details about how it makes money, Enron says that's proprietary information, sort of like Coca-Cola's secret formula."



Regulation creates a moral hazard. We don't understand finance, but it's *regulated*, so we're safe. "Regulation," Jerry Taylor says, "dulls the senses that you would take into an unregulated situation. If you hear screaming in the middle of the night, you assume it's hot sex, not murder."

Regulation of the marketplace isn't bad. The problem is, rather, that the regulation we have now is too good—at least in its intent. Our regulatory bodies strive to create honest dealings, fair trades, and a situation in which no one has an advantage over anyone else. But human beings aren't honest. And all trades are made because one person thinks he's getting the better of the other, and the other person thinks the same. And you will always have an uncle who's heard about a merger on the golf course, whereas I've got an uncle who gets his inside information at the OTB parlor.

Regulation would be better if its goal were not to ensure probity in finance but to rake muck. Get all the dirty laundry out in public: the ripped bodice of the hostile take-over, the stock jobber's filth-splattered britches, the soiled undershirt of dodgy bookkeeping, and campaign funding's reeking, horrible socks.

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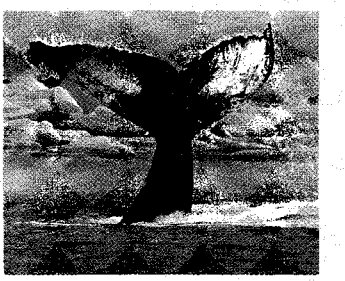

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THE OTHER DEFICIT

America's ballooning trade deficit may be the worst economic problem we face—and no one wants to talk about it

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THE ECONOMY

EAMONN FINGLETON

Economics is known for extraordinary fads and fallacies—for episodes that in retrospect are regarded as sheer lunacy. The most memorable such episodes involve wild speculation: the Dutch tulip mania of the seventeenth century, the Wall Street stock bubble of the late 1920s.

Less fabled outbreaks of economic error, however, have often done at least as much damage. In the 1840s, for instance, a fashion for extreme laissez-faire in London greatly exacerbated the consequences of the Irish famine. Rather than interfere with the workings of the market, British government officials looked the other way as wealthy Irish landowners exported large amounts of food at a time when millions were starving. In the 1920s ideology again got the better of common sense when the British government restored the pound to its high, pre–World War I value—a move that brought British industry to its knees and paved the way for the Great Depression of the 1930s. A doctrinaire, and utterly wrongheaded, commitment by both major American political parties in the early 1930s to balancing the federal budget greatly worsened the Depression.

In the late 1980s prominent commentators promoted Japanese stocks to the skies, on the theory that things in Japan were somehow different and the Japanese economic system would never let asset prices fall. When the Japanese government failed to play its putative role, countless billions of dollars in American insurance and pension-fund money vanished. More recently we heard from nearly everyone, up to and including the chairman of the Federal Reserve, that the rise of the New Economy had wrought fundamental changes in the economic rules. Assertions like these helped to inflate the Internet-stock bubble of the late 1990s.

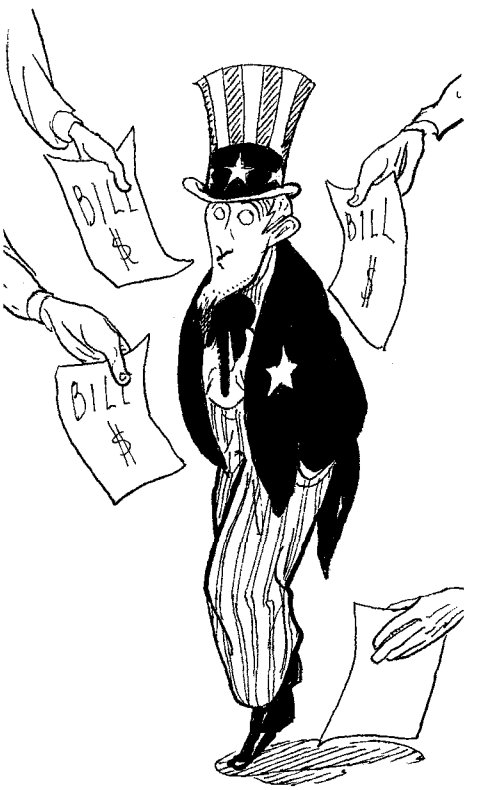
Today, entirely unnoticed by the American public, the United States is in the grip of a new economic error—one that will ultimately be seen to dwarf these others: the belief, a daily mantra for some of America's most prominent economic commentators, that America's rapidly growing trade deficits do not matter.

The view that trade deficits aren't harmful has its roots in an axiom of introductory economics: that any exchange between willing buyers and sellers benefits both sides. As applied to trade deficits, this premise supposedly means that countries with chronic-surplus economies, such as Japan and China, willingly choose to consume less than their industries produce. Conversely, countries with chronic-deficit economies, the United States among them, consume more than they produce, and "choose" to go into debt or sell assets to make up the difference.

Through the 1970s even people who believed that free markets generally produce optimal results hesitated to extend that theory to international trade. After all, a nation's economy is more complicated than even the largest corporation: debt to foreign lenders can affect foreign policy, and because workers can't easily migrate across borders for better jobs, the shift of production from one country to another has important political consequences.

But starting in the 1980s the claim that trade imbalances do not matter began to surface, especially on *The Wall Street Journal*'s op-ed pages. Twenty years later it has gone mainstream. Not only is it the *Journal*'s official editorial position but it has been taken up with enthusiasm by everyone from *Foreign Affairs* magazine to the Cato Institute. It is almost seen as a sign of economic literacy to remind the public that trade deficits aren't important. For example, David Gardner, a co-founder of Motley Fool, which is an influential Web site for stock-market investors, wrote recently (under the heading "Our Friend, the Trade Deficit"), "Trade deficits are in fact a pretty healthy sign in America, and we need not tinker to reduce them." Although the editors of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* occasionally offer warnings of possible dangers from soaring deficits, their usual position is that there is little to worry about. This attitude explains why, even as deficits have tripled in the past few years, they have all but disappeared from the news.

One thing is undeniable: the deficits are now vastly larger than most of America's best-informed citizens realize. On the "current account," as the broadest measure is known, the trade deficit in 2000 represented fully 4.5 percent of gross domestic product. That is the highest figure the United States has ever recorded—an impressive statement, given that the statistical series goes back to 1889, and that in



2000 the U.S. economy was seen as being stronger than ever. Before 1983 the current-account deficit had never exceeded even one percent in any year of the twentieth century. In 1972, for instance, the deficit was a mere 0.5 percent of the GDP—yet so troubled had President Richard Nixon been by the prospect of bad trade figures for that year that in the summer of 1971 he chose to go off the gold standard.

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When the accounting is done for 2001, the trade deficit will probably be seen to have fallen to about 4.1 percent, according to Charles McMillion, an economist at the consulting firm MBG. But given that imports are expected to fall disproportionately in a recession year, it is shocking that the drop from 2000 was not much greater. In 1991, the most recent previous recession year, the current account (which includes not only trade but also interest payments and government-to-government transfers) was actually in surplus.

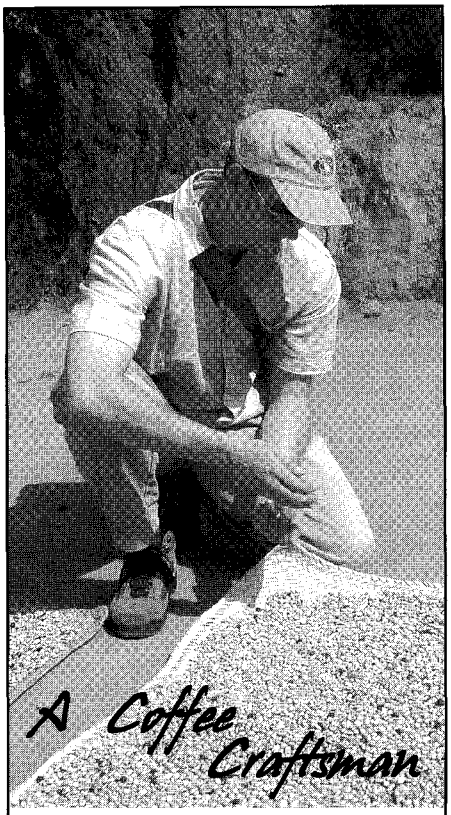
Perhaps the best gauge of the present crisis is the record of other Group of Seven nations. Some have certainly on occasion incurred deficits that were proportionately even larger—but virtually without exception they did so only in the economic devastation of the world wars and their immediate aftermath.

America's trade deficits matter for several fundamental reasons. As the author and economist Pat Choate points out, not only do excessive imports displace American jobs but in many cases they weaken America's defense base. During the Gulf War of 1991, for example, *The Washington Post* reported that American defense officials were "sweating bullets" as they waited for a reluctant Japan to supply crucial high-tech components for America's weapons systems.

The most immediate effect of the deficits is that they have to be paid for. Every dollar of current-account deficit must be funded with a dollar of foreign financing. Ultimately, the issue is who owns the world's assets. In just a few years in the 1980s the United States went from being the world's greatest net creditor to the world's greatest net debtor. Things have gotten much worse since then. From 1989 to 2000 trade deficits inflated America's net foreign liabilities sevenfold, to more than $1.8 trillion. A big factor in this trend was a major increase in foreign ownership of U.S. industry. Why should Americans care who owns U.S. industry? There are many reasons; the most obvious is that foreign corporations are much less likely than U.S. corporations to build their most productive plants in the United States.

For anyone familiar with economic history, it should be obvious why the current mania has hitherto been subjected to so little scrutiny in the American press. As John Kenneth Galbraith has pointed out, an economic error proliferates when someone has an interest in promoting it. In the case of the present trade crisis two sources of error have played a decisive role—the foreign-trade lobby and the Wall Street securities industry. The foreign-trade lobby, representing foreign exporters who sell into the American market, has an obvious interest in fudging the long-term consequences of trade deficits. Wall Street's motivation derives in part from the fact that many U.S. corporations gain a short-term increase in profits by moving jobs to low-wage places like Mexico and China. That increase comes, however, at the expense of America's fast-dwindling manufacturing work force. Particularly when American workers have no similarly productive new jobs to move to, the result is a serious weakening of the U.S. economy. Another reason Wall Street downplays the trade crisis is that many investment houses benefit from arranging the international transactions needed to finance trade deficits.

Apart from these interested, and influential, parties, many in the U.S. economics profession feel uneasy about the deficits. This emerged clearly in a survey I conducted of the ten American economists who had most recently won the Nobel Prize. Only one laureate, Gary Becker, of the University of Chicago, was prepared to endorse the media and Wall Street view that deficits pose no policy problem for the United States. Robert Solow, of MIT, said that deficits do pose a problem; Daniel McFadden, of the University of California at Berkeley, was less worried about the short term than the long term. Although the other seven were unwilling to comment publicly, several of them were clearly discomfited by the worsening trend in trade. Yet Wall Street's prestige in the American business press remains so great—despite the Internet-stock debacle—that dissenting opinions, like the ones the laureates express publicly and privately, get drowned out.



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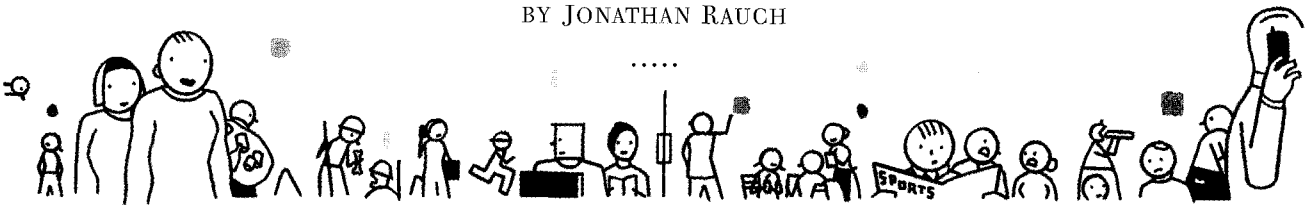
SEEING AROUND CORNERS

The new science of artificial societies suggests that real ones are both more predictable and more surprising than we thought. Growing long-vanished civilizations and modern-day genocides on computers will probably never enable us to foresee the future in detail—but we might learn to anticipate the kinds *of events that lie ahead, and where to look for interventions that might work*

BY JONATHAN RAUCH



In about A.D. 1300 the Anasazi people abandoned Long House Valley. To this day the valley, though beautiful in its way, seems touched by desolation. It runs eight miles more or less north to south, on the Navajo reservation in northern Arizona, just west of the broad Black Mesa and half an hour's drive south of Monument Valley. To the west Long House Valley is bounded by gently sloping domes of pink sandstone; to the east are low cliffs of yellow-white sedimentary rock crowned with a mist of windblown juniper. The valley floor is riverless and almost perfectly flat, a sea of blue-gray sagebrush and greasewood in sandy reddish soil carried in by wind and water. Today the valley is home to a modest Navajo farm, a few head of cattle, several electrical transmission towers, and not much else.

Yet it is not hard to imagine the vibrant farming district that this once was. The Anasazi used to cultivate the valley floor and build their settlements on low hills around the valley's perimeter. Remains of their settlements are easy to see, even today. Because the soil is sandy and the wind blows hard, not much stays buried, so if you leave the highway and walk along the edge of the valley (which, by the way, you can't do without a Navajo permit), you frequently happen upon shards of Anasazi pottery, which was eggshell-perfect and luminously painted. On the site of the valley's eponymous Long House—the largest of the ancient settlements—several ancient stone walls remain standing.

Last year I visited the valley with two University of Arizona archaeologists, George Gumerman and Jeffrey Dean, who between them have studied the area for fifty or more years. Every time I picked up a pottery shard, they dated it at a glance. By now they and other archaeologists know a great deal about the Anasazi of Long House Valley: approximately how many lived here, where their dwellings were, how much water was available to them for farming, and even (though here more guesswork is involved) approximately how much corn each acre of farmland produced. They have built up a whole prehistoric account of the people and their land. But they still do not know what everyone would most like to know, which is what happened to the Anasazi around A.D. 1300.

"Really, we've been sort of spinning our wheels in the last eight to ten years," Gumerman told me during the drive up to the valley. "Even though we were getting more data, we haven't been able to answer that question." Recently, however, they tried something new. Unable to interrogate or observe the real Long House Valley Anasazi, they set about growing artificial ones.

MR. SCHELLING'S NEIGHBORHOOD

Growing artificial societies on computers—*in silico*, so to speak—requires quite a lot of computing power and, still more important, some sophisticated modern programming languages, so the ability to do it is of recent vintage. Moreover, artificial societies do not belong to any one academic discipline, and their roots are, accordingly, difficult to trace. Clearly, however, one pioneer is Thomas C. Schelling, an economist who created a simple artificial neighborhood a generation ago.

Today Schelling is eighty years old. He looks younger than his age and is still active as an academic economist, currently at the University of Maryland. He and his wife, Alice, live in a light-filled house in Bethesda, Maryland, where I went to see him one day not long ago. Schelling is of medium height and slender, with a full head of iron-gray hair, big clear-framed eyeglasses, and a mild, soft-spoken manner. Unlike most other economists I've dealt with, Schelling customarily thinks about everyday questions of collective organization and disorganization, such as lunch-

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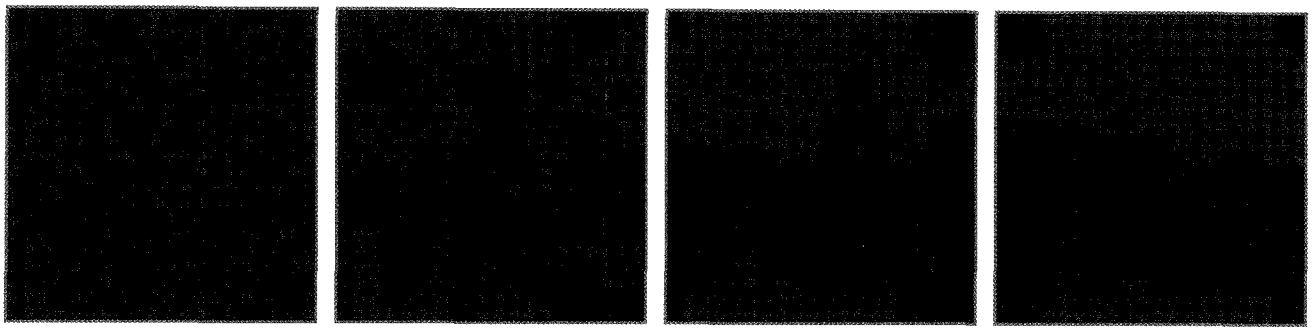

Figure 1.

room seating and traffic jams. He tends to notice the ways in which complicated social patterns can emerge even when individual people are following very simple rules, and how those patterns can suddenly shift or even reverse as though of their own accord. Years ago, when he taught in a second-floor classroom at Harvard, he noticed that both of the building's two narrow stairwells—one at the front of the building, the other at the rear—were jammed during breaks with students laboriously jostling past one another in both directions. As an experiment, one day he asked his 10:00 A.M. class to begin taking the front stairway up and the back one down. "It took about three days," Schelling told me, "before the nine o'clock class learned you should always come up the front stairs and the eleven o'clock class always came down the back stairs"—without, so far as Schelling knew, any explicit instruction from the ten o'clock class. "I think they just forced the accommodation by changing the traffic pattern," Schelling said.

In the 1960s he grew interested in segregated neighborhoods. It was easy in America, he noticed, to find neighborhoods that were mostly or entirely black or white, and correspondingly difficult to find neighborhoods where neither race made up more than, say, three fourths of the total. "The distribution," he wrote in 1971, "is so U-shaped that it is virtually a choice of two extremes." That might, of course, have been a result of widespread racism, but Schelling suspected otherwise. "I had an intuition," he told me, "that you could get a lot more segregation than would be expected if you put people together and just let them interact."

One day in the late 1960s, on a flight from Chicago to Boston, he found himself with nothing to read and began doodling with pencil and paper. He drew a straight line and then "populated" it with Xs and Os. Then he decreed that each X and O wanted at least two of its six nearest neighbors to be of its own kind, and he began moving them around in ways that would make more of them content with their neighborhood. "It was slow going," he told me, "but by the time I got off the plane in Boston, I knew the results were interesting." When he got home, he and his eldest son, a coin collector, set out copper and zinc pennies (the latter were wartime relics) on a grid that resembled a checkerboard. "We'd look around and find a penny that wanted to move and figure out where it wanted to move to," he said. "I kept getting results that I found quite striking."

To see what happens in this sort of artificial neighborhood, look at Figure 1, above, which contains a series of stills captured from a Schelling-style computer simulation created for the purposes of this article. (All the illustrations in the article are taken from animated artificial-society simulations that you can view online at the magazine's Web site, at www. theatlantic.com/rauch.) You are looking down on an artificial neighborhood containing two kinds of people, blue and red, with—for simplicity's sake—no blank spaces (that is, every "house" is occupied). The board wraps around, so if a dot exits to the right, it reappears on the left, and if it exits at the top, it re-enters at the bottom.

In the first frame blues and reds are randomly distributed. But they do not stay that way for long, because each agent, each simulated person, is ethnocentric. That is, the agent is happy only if its four nearest neighbors (one at each point of the compass) include at least a certain number of agents of its own color. In the random distribution, of course, many agents are unhappy; and in each of many iterations—in which a computer essentially does what Schelling and his son did as they moved coins around their grid—unhappy agents are allowed to switch places. Very quickly (Frame 2) the reds gravitate to their own neighborhood, and a few seconds later the segregation is complete: reds and blues live in two distinct districts (Frame 3). After that the border between the districts simply shifts a little as reds and blues jockey to move away from the boundary (Frame 4).

Because no two runs begin from the same random starting point, and because each agent's moves affect every subsequent move, no two runs are alike; but this one is typical. When I first looked at it, I thought I must be seeing a model of a community full of racists. I assumed, that is, that each agent wanted to live only among neighbors of its own color. I was wrong. In the simulation I've just described, each agent seeks only two neighbors of its own color. That is, these "people" would all be perfectly happy in an integrated neighborhood, half red, half blue. If they were real, they might well swear that they valued diversity. The realization that their individual preferences lead to a collective outcome indistinguishable from thoroughgoing

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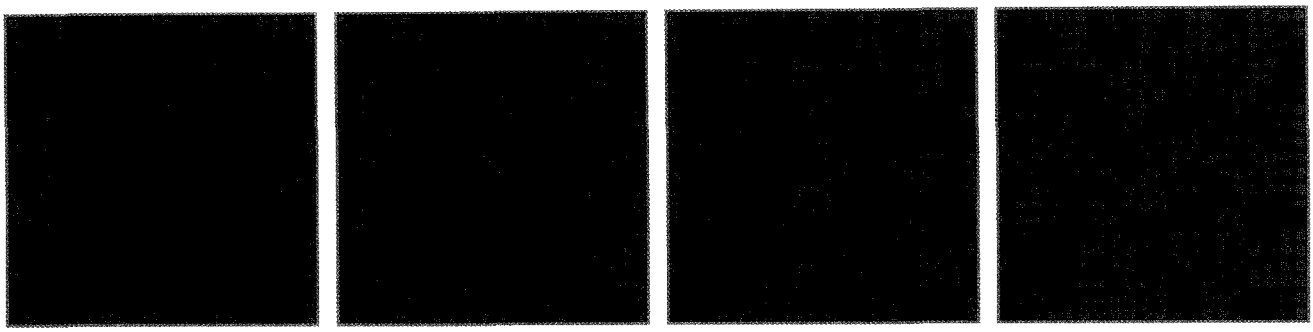

Figure 2.

racism might surprise them no less than it surprised me and, many years ago, Thomas Schelling.

In the same connection, look at Figure 2, above. This time the agents seek only one neighbor of their own color. Again the simulation begins with a random distribution (Frame 1). This time sorting proceeds more slowly and less starkly. But it does proceed. About a third of the way through the simulation, discernible ethnic clusters have emerged (Frame 2). As time goes on, the boundaries tend to harden (Frames 3 and 4). Most agents live in areas that are identifiably blue or red. Yet these "people" would be perfectly happy to be in the minority; they want only to avoid being completely alone. Each would no doubt regard itself as a model of tolerance and, noticing the formation of color clusters, might conclude that a lot of other agents must be racists.

Schelling's model implied that even the simplest of societies could produce outcomes that were simultaneously orderly and unintended: outcomes that were in no sense accidental, but also in no sense deliberate. "The interplay of individual choices, where unorganized segregation is concerned, is a complex system with collective results that bear no close relation to the individual intent," he wrote in 1969. In other words, even in this extremely crude little world, knowing individuals' intent does not allow you to foresee the social outcome, and knowing the social outcome does not give you an accurate picture of individuals' intent. Furthermore, the godlike outside observer—Schelling, or me, or you—is no more able to foresee what will happen than are the agents themselves. The only way to discover what pattern, if any, will emerge from a given set of rules and a particular starting point is to move the pennies around and watch the results.

Schelling moved on to other subjects in the 1970s. A few years later a political scientist named Robert Axelrod (now at the University of Michigan) used a computer simulation to show that cooperation could emerge spontaneously in a world of self-interested actors. His work and Schelling's work and other dribs and drabs of research hinting at simulated societies were, however, isolated threads; and for the next decade or more the threads remained ungathered.

Sugarscape and Beyond

I have office space at The Brookings Institution, which is the oldest of Washington's think tanks. Since it is one of the more staid places in town, it was probably inevitable that I would notice Joshua Epstein. Epstein is tall and portly, with a wild tuft of graying hair above each ear, a round face, and the sort of exuberant manner that brings to mind a Saint Patrick's Day parade more readily than a Washington think tank. "No foam!" he roared, grinning, to a Starbucks server one day when we went out for coffee. "Keep your damn foam!" Anyone who notices Epstein is soon likely to encounter Robert Axtell, his collaborator and alter ego. A programming wizard with training in economics and public policy, Axtell is of medium height, quiet, and as understated as Epstein is boisterous. When he speaks, the words spill out so quickly and unemphatically that the listener must mentally insert spaces between them.

Epstein was born in New York City and grew up in Amherst, Massachusetts. His father was a logician and a philosopher of science. Nonetheless, Epstein never managed to finish high school. Instead he got into college on a piano audition and, after composing a series of chamber-music pieces, ended up switching to the study of mathematics and political economy. That led to a Ph.D. in political science in 1981 and then a position at Brookings, plus the realization that he was fascinated by mathematical models. One day in the early 1990s, when he was giving a talk about his model of arms races, he met Axtell, who was then a graduate student. He wound up bringing Axtell to Brookings, in 1992.

Not long after, Epstein attended a conference at the Santa Fe Institute—renowned as a pioneering center for research on "complexity," the generation of spontaneous order and intricate patterns from seemingly simple rules. At Santa Fe just then a big subject was artificial life, often called A-life. "All of the work was about coral reefs, ecology, growing things that look like trees, growing things that look like flocks of birds, schools of fish, coral, and so on," Epstein told me. "And I thought, jeez, why don't we try to use these techniques to grow societies?" Fired up, he returned to Brookings and discussed the idea with Axtell.

There followed the inevitable napkin moment, when the

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two of them sat in the cafeteria and sketched out a simple artificial world in which little hunter-gatherer creatures would move around a landscape finding, storing, and consuming the only resource, sugar. When they brought Sugarscape, as they called it, to life with the computer, they were startled to see that almost immediately their rudimentary A-society produced a skewed distribution of sugar that looked very much like the skewed distribution of wealth in human societies, even though nothing about the agents' simple behavioral rules pointed to any such outcome. For several years they built up and elaborated Sugarscape, and discovered that simple rules could produce complex social phenomena that mimicked migrations, epidemics, trade. "Every time we build one of these things, it does some shocking thing," Epstein told me. "You can make it as simple as you want, and it will do something surprising, almost certainly."

Epstein and Axtell then began applying their technique, which they called agent-based modeling, to a variety of problems and questions, and as they did so they quietly inverted a number of tenets of the more conventional varieties of social modeling. In Sugarscape, and in the other artificial societies that followed, Epstein and Axtell made their agents heterogeneous. That is, the artificial people, like real people, were different from one another. Each Sugarscape agent has its own "genetic code": a distinctive combination of metabolic rate (how much sugar each agent needs in order to stay alive), vision (how far the agent can "see" as it hunts for sugar), and so forth. This was a small move that was actually quite radical, and not just because of the daunting computational requirements. In most conventional social-science models people are assumed to be more or less the same: multiple copies of a single representative person. Even in Thomas Schelling's artificial neighborhood all the agents are alike except in color. Moreover, conventional models tend to assume that all their clonelike individuals have complete or near complete knowledge of their world. In Schelling's model unhappy agents, like the modeler himself, could survey the whole scene to find a better situation. In ordinary economic models, by the same token, people all see essentially the same big picture, so if a stock is underpriced, for example, traders will quickly spot the anomaly. Epstein and Axtell instead built models in which agents' vision and knowledge were limited; agents knew only what was going on nearby or what they "heard" from their "friends" (often a unique social network was assigned to every agent). Each agent, therefore, had unique preferences and unique knowledge.

It took me a little while to understand why in some respects this is a whole new ball game. In years of writing on economics I had grown comfortable with the sort of equation-based modeling that is common and, unquestionably, indispensable in the social sciences. The modeler looks at social patterns in the real world and tries to write equations that describe what's going on. The modeler, that is, views the world from on high and attempts to fit it to regular lines and curves, which are then used to make predictions. A simple and elegant artificial society created by Ross Hammond brought home to me what I had been missing.

Hammond is well over six feet tall and reed thin, with a broad forehead and a pointed chin that make his face a neat triangle. When I met him, last year, he worked as an assistant to Epstein and Axtell (he has since moved on to graduate school at the University of Michigan), but he originally devised his world in 1999, for a senior thesis at Williams College. He decided to make an abstract model of social corruption. He created an artificial world populated with two kinds of agents: citizens and bureaucrats. Each of these agents has his own susceptibility to corruption and his own network of friends. Every time a citizen meets a bureaucrat, the two conduct a transaction. If they collude corruptly, both pocket a nice kickback, whereas if both behave honestly, neither gets payola. If a mismatch occurs, and only one agent is willing to cheat, the honest agent "reports" the corrupt one to an unseen policing authority.

So far the setup is conventional game theory. Less conventional is this: no agent knows exactly how many reports of corruption will land him in jail, or how many other agents are honest or corrupt, or what most other agents are doing. He knows only what has happened recently to himself and his friends. If suddenly many of them land in jail, he will assume that the cops are cracking down and will behave more honestly until the coast looks clearer. (This excludes a sprinkling of George Washingtons—agents who are incorruptibly honest.) The agents, in other words, have varying personalities and limited information, and they display what economists call "bounded rationality"—that is, they make the most rational choices they can based on that *limited* information.

Hammond had no idea what his stipulations would produce. Somewhat surprisingly, he found that within many plausible ranges of corruption payoffs, punishments, and agent characteristics, his artificial society quickly settled down into rampant honesty. But there were some plausible parameters (big payoffs and short jail terms) that produced a truly startling result. To see it, look at Figure 3, on the facing page.

This shows Ross Hammond's little A-society, a world of citizens (bureaucrats are omitted for simplicity's sake) who at any given moment can be either corrupt, honest, or in jail. Schelling's checkerboard represented a physical space; the space in Figure 3, in contrast, is purely abstract. Whether agents are near each other makes no difference. What does matter is whether in any given transaction they behave honestly or corruptly. A corrupt agent is a yellow rectangle, an honest one blue, and a jailed one red. The population at any given moment stretches along a thin horizontal ribbon one rectangle deep, so the window actually portrays society over time. Thus a long vertical blue bar

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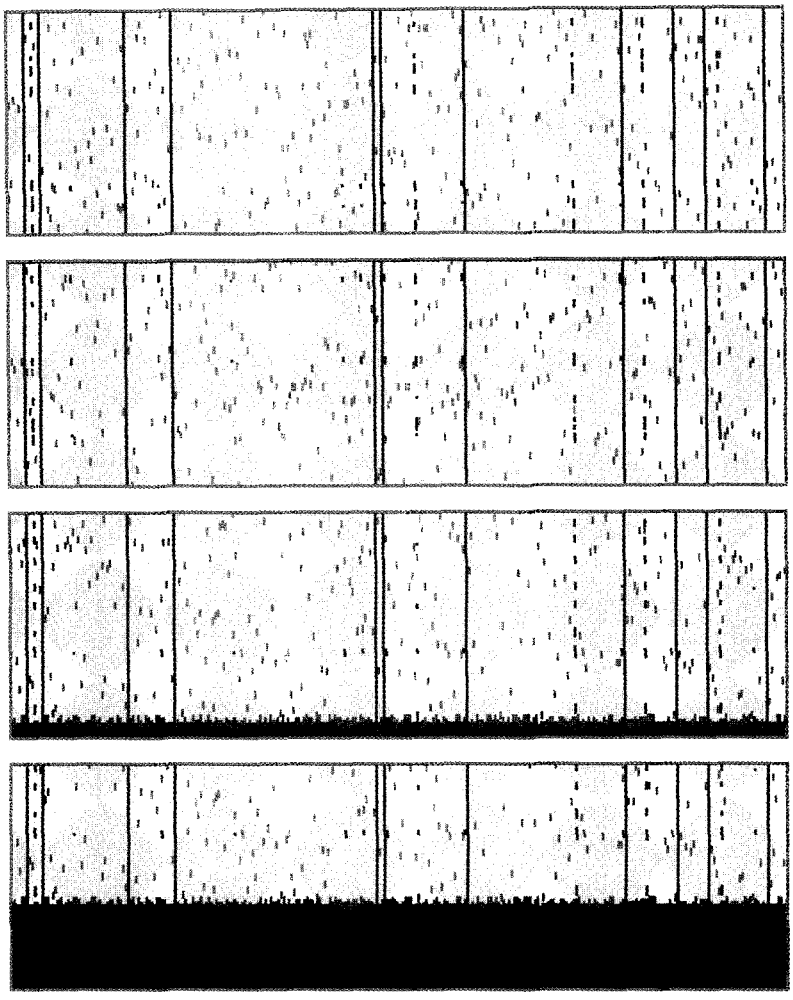

Figure 3.

represents a single agent who is incorruptible (a George Washington), whereas an isolated blue rectangle represents an agent who usually behaves corruptly but on that occasion chooses honesty.

At the top of the first frame, as the agents begin doing business, they are randomly distributed. The field is almost entirely yellow, which means that corruption is the norm. Only occasionally does a yellow agent turn blue—presumably when a bunch of his friends have gone to jail (the friends are not necessarily near him physically, and the social networks are not displayed in this demonstration). Frame 2, captured later, shows more of the same; in this society, clearly, corruption pays and is the norm. Look closely, though, a little more than halfway down Frame 2, and you may notice a vaguely horizontal cluster of reds. Just randomly, in the course of things, there has been a surge of agents going to jail. That turns out to be important for reasons that become clearer when you look at Frame 3, captured later still. Here, just above the bottom of the frame, an unusually large number of agents are again being jailed—and suddenly everyone turns blue. This predominantly corrupt society has become uniformly honest. But for how long? As the last frame shows, honesty is the new norm. With everybody behaving honestly, there is no payoff for corruption (payoff requires two corrupt dealers), so the A-society stays honest. If the simulation continued running, it would show nothing but blue.

In the jargon, a dynamic system's sudden shift from one kind of behavior to another is typically referred to as "tipping" (and has been since well before the term became a fashionable metaphor for sudden change of whatever sort). Hammond's little world, despite its almost brutal simplicity, had tipped.

Hammond was astonished, so he ran the simulation again and again. No two runs were the same, because each began from a different random starting point, and no run was predictable in its details, because the agents' interactions, even in so simple a world, were unfathomably complicated. Sometimes the A-society would tip from corrupt to honest almost immediately; sometimes it would tip only after running for hours on end; but always, sooner or later, it tipped. The switch appeared to be inevitable, but its timing and the path taken to reach it were completely unpredictable. What was going on?

Every so often, in the course of random events, a particularly large number of corrupt agents, who happen to have particularly large networks of friends who perhaps themselves have large social networks, will be arrested. That, Hammond figures, has a double-barreled effect: it leads a lot of agents to notice that many of their friends are under arrest, and it also increases the likelihood that they will encounter an honest agent in the next transaction. Fearing that they will meet their friends' fate, the agents behave more honestly; and in doing so they heighten yet further the odds that a corrupt agent will be nailed, inspiring still more caution about corruption. Soon—in fact, almost instantly—so many agents are behaving honestly that corruption ceases to pay, and everyone turns honest.

"There are plenty of different cities and countries that have gone from a high degree of corruption to a low degree of corruption," Hammond says. His A-society suggests that in such a transition, the fear of being caught may be at least as important as the odds of actually being caught. To test that possibility, Hammond re-ran his simulation, but this time he allowed all the agents to know not just how many of their friends were in jail but how many people were jailed throughout the whole society: in other words, the agents knew the odds of arrest as well as the police did. Sure enough, fully informed agents never got scared enough to reform. Hammond's A-society seemed to have

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"grown" a piece of knowledge that many law-enforcement agencies (think of the Internal Revenue Service, with its targeted, high-profile audits) have long intuited—namely, that limited resources are often more effectively spent on fearsome, and fearsomely unpredictable, high-profile sweeps than on uniform and thus easily second-guessed patterns of enforcement.

Hammond also wondered what would happen if he made all the agents alike, instead of giving each a personality marked by a randomly varied proclivity to cheat. What if, say, all agents preferred honesty exactly half the time? The answer was that the A-society never made a transition; it stayed corrupt forever, because everyone "knew" how everyone else would behave. A social model that viewed individuals as multiple copies of the same fully informed person could thus never "see" the social transformation that Hammond found, for the simple reason that without diversity and limited knowledge, *the transformation never happens.* Given that human beings are invariably diverse and that the knowledge at their disposal is invariably limited, it would seem to follow that even societies in which unsophisticated people obey rudimentary rules will produce surprises and discontinuities—events that cannot be foreseen either through intuition or through the more conventional sorts of social science.

Growing Zipf's Law

Every so often scientists notice a rule or a regularity that makes no particular sense on its face but seems to hold true nonetheless. One such is a curiosity called Zipf's Law. George Kingsley Zipf was a Harvard linguist who in the 1930s noticed that the distribution of words adhered to a regular statistical pattern. The most common word in English—"the"—appears roughly twice as often in ordinary usage as the second most common word, three times as often as the third most common, ten times as often as the tenth most common, and so on. As an afterthought, Zipf also observed that cities' sizes followed the same sort of pattern, which became known as a Zipf distribution. Oversimplifying a bit, if you rank cities by population, you find that City No. 10 will have roughly a tenth as many residents as City No. 1, City No. 100 a hundredth as many, and so forth. (Actually the relationship isn't quite that clean, but mathematically it is strong nonetheless.) Subsequent observers later noticed that this same Zipfian relationship between size and rank applies to many things: for instance, corporations and firms in a modern economy are Zipf-distributed.

Nature is replete with such mysteriously constant statistical relationships. "Power laws," scientists call them, because the relationship between size and rank is expressed as an exponent. Earthquakes, for instance, follow Zipf-style power laws. Large earthquakes are rare, small ones are common, and the size of each event multiplied by its rank is a rough constant. In the 1980s scientists began to believe that power-law relationships are characteristic of systems that are in a state known as self-organized criticality, of which the textbook example is a trickle of sand pouring onto a tabletop. At first the sand merely piles up, but eventually it reaches a point where any additional sand is likely to trigger an avalanche—often very small, occasionally quite large. The sand pile now maintains itself at a roughly constant height, and the overall distribution of large and small avalanches follows a power law, even though the size of any particular avalanche is always unpredictable.

That sand and other inanimate things behave in this way is interesting, even striking. That human societies might display similar patterns, however, is weird. People are (generally) intelligent creatures who act deliberately. Yet their cities, for example, sort themselves out in a mathematically regular fashion, a fact that I confirmed by glancing at the *World Almanac.* In 1950 and 1998 the lists of the top twenty-five cities in America were quite different, yet the cities' relative sizes were almost exactly the same. The biggest city (New York in both years) was about four times as big as the fourth biggest (Los Angeles in 1950, Houston in 1998), which was about three times as big as the sixteenth biggest (New Orleans in 1950, Baltimore in 1998)—not an exact fit, but close. It was as though each city knew its permitted size relative to all the others and modulated its growth to keep the relationships constant. But, obviously, people moving to one city have not the faintest notion how their movements will affect the relative sizes of all cities. What might be going on? One plausible inference is that societies are like sand piles: complex systems whose next perturbation is unpredictable but whose behavior, viewed on a large scale and over time, follows certain patterns—patterns, moreover, that the individual actors in the system (grains of sand, human beings) are quite unaware of generating.

The day I started getting really excited about artificial societies was the day Rob Axtell mentioned that he had created artificial companies and cities, and that the companies and cities both followed Zipf's Law. According to Axtell, conventional economic theory has yet to produce any accepted explanation for why the size distribution of firms or cities follows a power law. Perhaps, Axtell thought, the trick is not to explain Zipf's Law but to grow it. He went to his computer and built an artificial world of diverse agents ranging from workaholics to idlers. Axtell's workers start out self-employed but can organize themselves into firms and job-hop, always in search of whatever combination of money and leisure fits their temperament. When individuals join forces to form companies, their potential productivity rises, because of companies' efficiency advantages. At the same time, however, as each company grows larger, each agent faces a greater temptation to slack off, collect the paycheck, and let colleagues carry the load.

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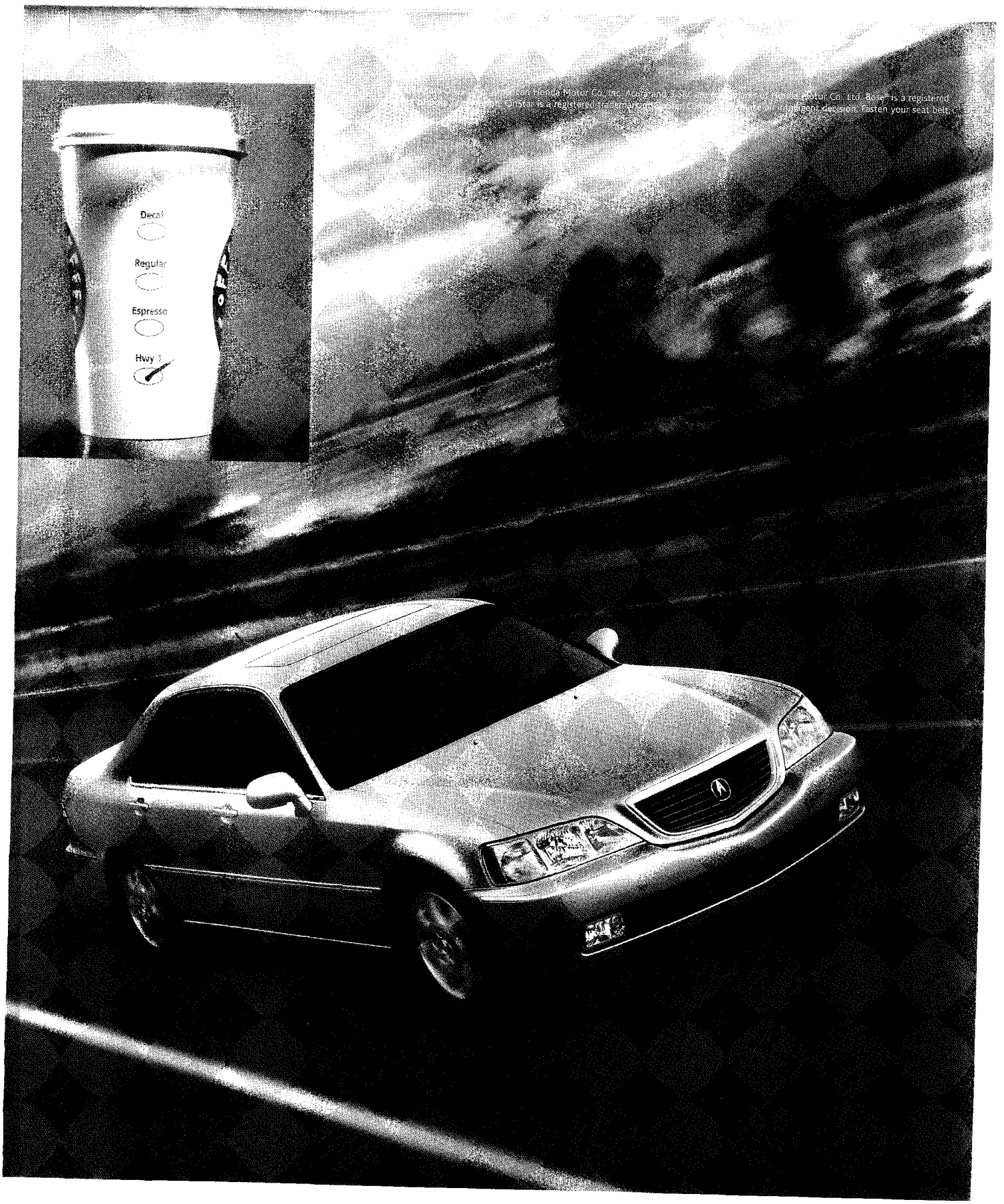

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The resulting universe of A-firms, Axtell found, is like the sand pile, full of avalanches small and large as firms form, prosper, grow lazy, lose talent to hungrier firms, and then shrink or collapse. As in real life, a few A-firms live and thrive for generations, but most are evanescent, and now and then a really big one collapses despite having been stable for years. Sometimes the addition of one slacker too many can push a seemingly solid firm into instability and fission; but you can't be sure in advance which firm will crumble, or when.

In such a world you might expect no regularity at all. And yet, Axtell told me, "The first time we turned it on, we got Zipf!" Despite the firms' constant churning, the distribution of large and small firms maintained the same sort of mathematical regularity seen in real life. Axtell and Richard Florida, a professor of regional economic development at Carnegie Mellon University, took the logical next step and built a model of cities, which were assumed to be basically agglomerations of firms. Same result: with no tuning or tweaking, the artificial cities unfailingly lined themselves up in a Zipf distribution and then, as a group, preserved that distribution even as particular cities grew and shrank in what looked to the naked eye like random turmoil. "All of a sudden," Florida told me, "I looked at Rob's model and it dawned on me. This creates the city *system*." The artificial cities and their artificial residents were all unknowingly locked in a competition for talent, but they could retain only so much of it before they lost ground relative to other clusters of talent. Richard Florida, to whom the Zipf distribution of cities had previously seemed a mere curiosity, infers that the Zipf relationship is much more than a pretty anomaly or a statistical parlor trick. It bespeaks the higher-order patterns into which human beings, and thus societies, unconsciously arrange themselves.

Artificial Genocide

If societies can order themselves systematically but unconsciously, it stands to reason that they can also disorder themselves systematically but unconsciously. As societies, the Balkans, Rwanda, Indonesia, and South Central Los Angeles have little in common, yet all have experienced, in recent memory, sudden and shocking transformations from a tense but seemingly sustainable communal peace to communal disorder and violence. Obviously, riots in America are in no way morally comparable to genocide in Rwanda, but what is striking in all these cases is the abruptness with which seemingly law-abiding and peaceable people turned into looters or killers. Scholars often use the metaphor of contagion in talking and thinking about mass violence, because the violence seems to spread so quickly from person to person and neighborhood to neighborhood. Yet sociologists who have studied mass behavior have learned that people in crowds and groups usually remain rational, retain their individuality, and exercise

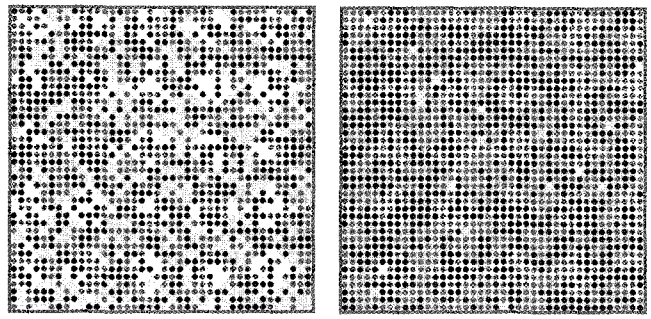

Figure 4.

their good judgment; that is, they remain very much themselves. The illusion that some larger collective mind, or some sort of infectious hysteria, has seized control is just that: an illusion. Somehow, when communal violence takes hold, individuals make choices, presumably responding to local incentives or conditions, that make the whole society seem to have suddenly decided to turn savage. Might it be that rampant violence is no more the result of mass hysteria than the rampant segregation in Thomas Schelling's artificial neighborhood is the result of mass racism?

Figure 4, above, shows Joshua Epstein's artificial society containing two kinds of people, blues and greens. As usual in Epstein's models, each agent has his own personality—the relevant traits being, in this case, the agent's degree of privation or discontent, his level of ethnic hostility, and his willingness to risk arrest when the police are around. Also as usual, agents can "see" what is going on only in their immediate neighborhoods, not across the whole society. The agents' environment is one of ethnic tension between blues and greens; the higher the tension, the more likely it is that the agents will, in Epstein's term, "go active"—which in real life could mean looting a neighbor's store or seizing his house, but which in the current instance will mean killing him. When an agent turns red, his discontent or hatred has overcome his fear of arrest, and he has killed one randomly selected neighbor of the other color. Those are the rules. They are very simple rules.

In Figure 4 none of the agents are red. There is not enough ethnic tension to inspire them to go active, so they coexist peacefully, and indeed fill up the screen as their populations grow (they can procreate). Between Frames 1 and 2 all that happens is that blues and greens move around and occupy previously empty spaces. The situation looks safe and stable, but it is not. In Figure 5, on the following two pages, ethnic tension has increased only slightly, but that increment has shifted the society into a radically different state. In Frame 1 the randomly distributed agents have set about killing one another, so their world is awash with red dots. Shortly afterward, only a few seconds into the simulation, the population has thinned dramatically (Frame 2), with most of the agents who live in ethnically mixed zones having been

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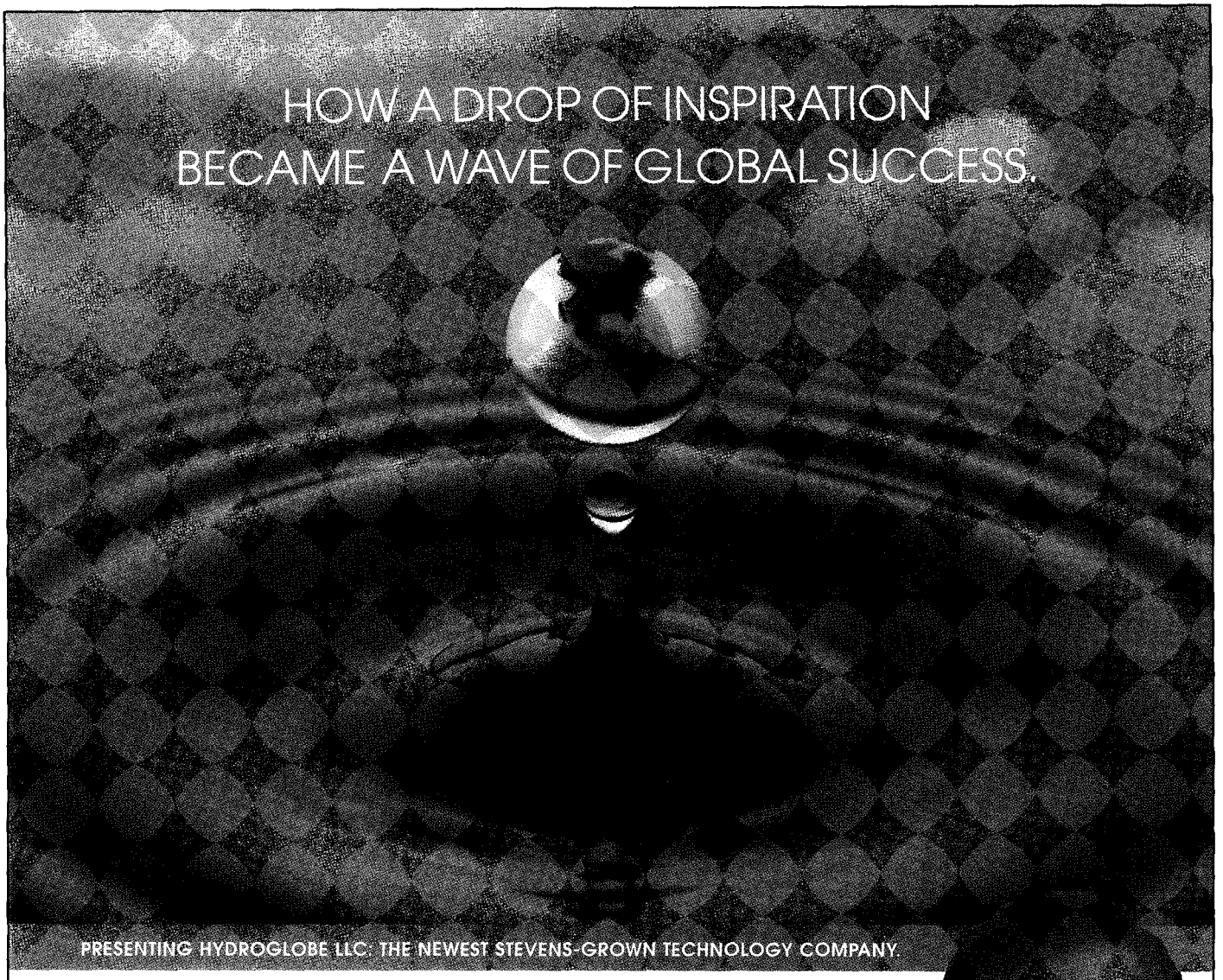
HOW A DROP OF INSPIRATION BECAME A WAVE OF GLOBAL SUCCESS.



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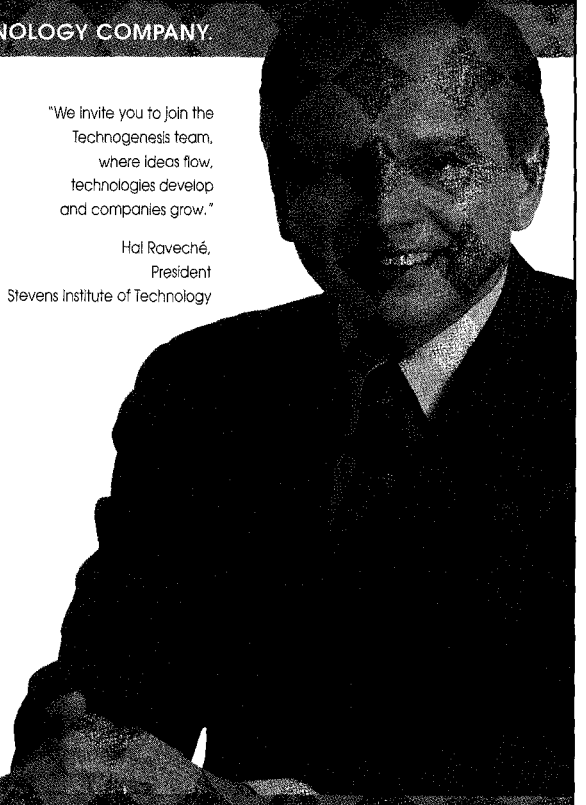

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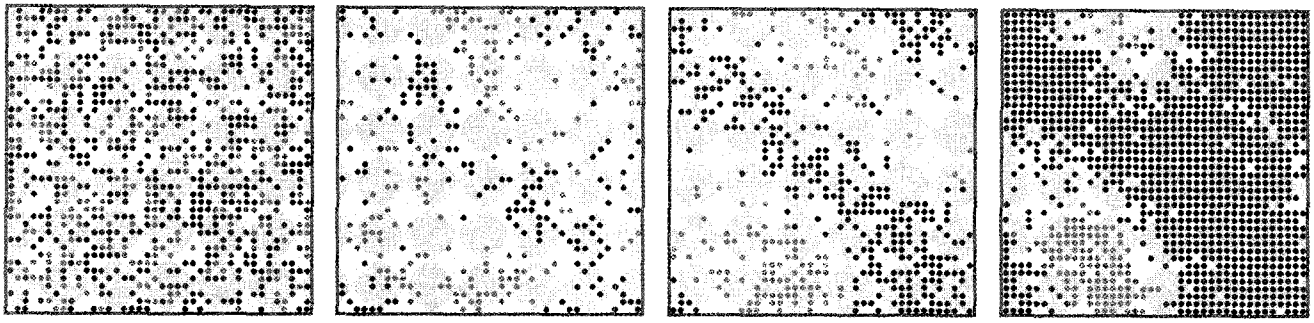

Figure 5.

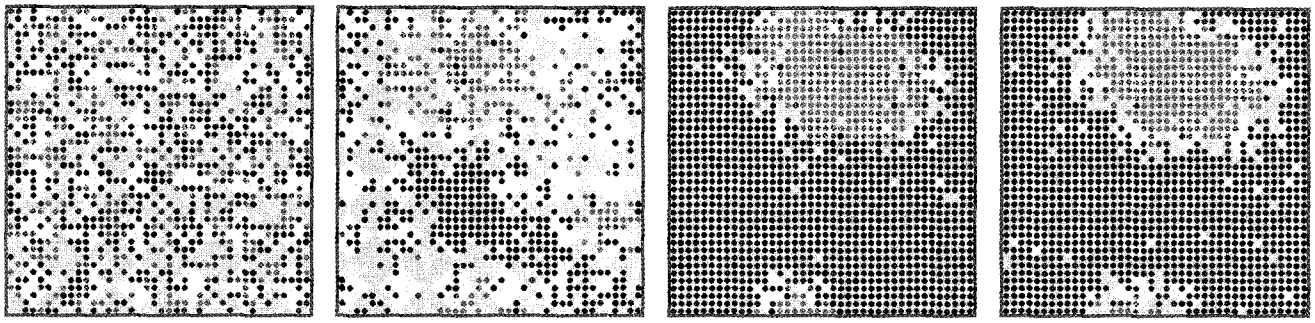

Figure 6.

picked off. By Frame 3 blues and greens have separated, with violence flaring along the borders and blues predominating.

Epstein has run this simulation countless times from different random starting points, and it turns out that neither color enjoys an inherent advantage: blues and greens are equally likely to prevail, with the outcome depending on random local events that tilt the balance one way or the other. No two runs are quite alike. But all are the same in one respect: once a side has attained the upper hand, its greater numbers allow it to annihilate the other side sooner or later. In Frame 4 greens are confined to a single ethnic enclave (the bottom of the frame wraps around to join the top), where they huddle in beleaguered solidarity as blues continue to nibble at them. The rest of the story, in Frames 5 and 6, speaks for itself.

Epstein then added a third element, one that might be of special interest to the United Nations: cops, or, if you prefer, peacekeepers. In Figure 6, above, cops are represented by black dots. Like other agents, they can "see" only in their immediate vicinity. Their rule is to look around for active agents and put them in jail. The less hotheaded agents will behave peaceably when a cop is nearby, so as to avoid arrest. The result is a markedly different situation.

In Frame 1 agents and cops are scattered randomly, and the bolder agents (in red) are setting upon their victims. When they commit murder near a cop, the agents go to jail. Even so, the cops are initially overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of violence, and in Frames 2 and 3 an enclave of embattled greens forms, just as before. Now, however, there is an important difference: the enclave is stable. Once it has dwindled to a certain size, the cops are able to contain the violence by making arrests along the border. As long as the cops stay in place, the enclave is safe. But what if the cops are withdrawn? The result is exactly the same as what happened when peacekeepers abandoned enclaves in Bosnia and Rwanda. In Frame 4 the cops have all departed. Again, Frames 5 and 6 speak for themselves.

I don't think I'm alone in finding this artificial genocide eerie. The outcome, of course, is chilling; but what is at least as spooky is that such complicated—to say nothing of familiar—social patterns can be produced by mindless packets of data following a few almost ridiculously simple rules. If I showed you these illustrations and told you they represented genocide, you might well assume you were seeing a schematic diagram of an actual event. Moreover, the model is designed without any element of imitation or communication, so mass hysteria or organized effort is literally impossible. No agent is knowingly copying his peers or following the crowd; none is consciously organizing a self-protective enclave. All the agents are separately and individually reacting "rationally"—according to rules, in any case—to local conditions that the agents themselves are rapidly altering. As hotheads begin to go active, the odds that any one misbehaving agent will be arrested decline, emboldening more-timid agents nearby to act up, reducing the odds of arrest still further, emboldening more agents, and so on. As in real life, the violence, once begun, can spread rapidly as cops are overwhelmed in one neighborhood after another. Although the agents are atomized and disorganized, the violence is communal and coherent. It has form and direction and even a sort of malevolent logic.

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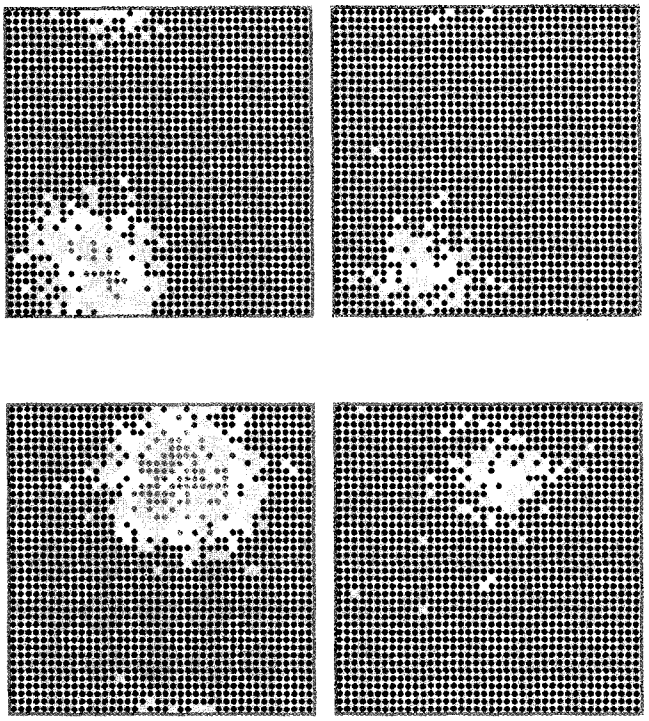

At a Brookings conference last year, where Epstein presented his artificial genocide, Alison Des Forges was in attendance. Des Forges, a senior adviser to Human Rights Watch Africa, is one of the world's leading authorities on the Rwandan genocide of 1994. After the session I asked her what she made of Epstein's demonstration. Neither she nor anyone else, Epstein included, believes that an array of little dots explains the Rwandan cataclysm or any other real-world event; the very notion is silly. What the simulation did suggest to Des Forges is that disparate social breakdowns, in widely separated parts of the world, may have common dynamics—linking Rwanda, for instance, to other horrors far away. She also told me that Epstein's demonstration reminded her of Hutu killers' attack on Tutsis who had gathered on a Rwandan hilltop: the torches, the fires, the killing working its way up the hill.

Cyber-Anasazi

In 1994 Epstein went back to the Santa Fe Institute, this time to lecture on Sugarscape. He told me, "I came to a run in the Sugarscape that we called the Protohistory, which was really this made-up toy history of civilization, where it starts with some little soup of agents and they go to peaks on the Sugarscape and coalesce into tribes and have lots of kids and this forces them down in between the peaks and they smash into the other tribe and they have all this assimilation and combat and all this other stuff. And I showed that toy history to this typically unlikely Santa Fe collection of archaeologists and biologists and physicists, and I said, 'Does this remind anyone of anything real?' And a hand shot up, and it was George Gumerman's hand. I had never met George. And he said, 'It reminds me of the Anasazi.' I said, 'What the heck is that?' And he told me the story of this tribe that flourished in the Southwest and suddenly vanished. And why did they suddenly vanish? I thought, That's a fascinating question."

The greatest challenge for A-society researchers is to show that their wind-up worlds bear on anything real. Epstein asked Gumerman if he had data on the Anasazi, and Gumerman replied that there were lots of data, data covering a span of centuries and recording, year by year, environmental conditions, settlement patterns, demographic trends, and more. "I thought, jeez," Epstein says, "if there's actual data, maybe we can actually reconstruct this civilization computationally. I came back all excited and told Rob. We built this terrain in a computer and we literally animated this entire history, looking down on it as if it were a movie. We said, Okay, that's what really happened. Let's try to grow that in an agent-based model. Let's create little cyber-Anasazi and see if we can equip them with rules for farming, moving, mating, under which you just leave them alone with the environment changing as it truly did, and see if they reproduce—grow—the true, observed history."

Gumerman and Jeffrey Dean (and several other scholars who joined in the effort) were equally interested, for reasons of their own. Some scholars believed that drought and other environmental problems caused the Anasazi to leave; others blamed marauders or internecine warfare or disease or culture, as well as drought. The argument had waxed and waned ever since the 1920s. "We've thought the environment was important," Gumerman told me, "and other archaeologists said they didn't think it was that important, and that's been the level of argument until now." The prospect of growing artificial Anasazi in cyberspace suggested a new way to get some traction on the question.

So they created a computerized replica of the Long House Valley environment from A.D. 800 to A.D. 1350 and populated it with agents—in this case, digital farmers. Each agent represents a household and is given a set of what the scholars believed to be realistic attributes: family size, life-spans, nutritional needs, and so on. Every year each artificial household harvests the corn on its land during the growing season and draws down its stocks in the winter. If a household's land produces enough corn to feed the family, the family stays and farms the same land again the next year; if the yield is insufficient, the family moves to the nearest available plot that looks promising and tries again; if the family still cannot eke out sustenance, it is removed from the simulation. I have simplified the parameters, which allow for the formation of new households, the birth of children, and so on. Still, the rules are fairly straightforward, basically directing the artificial Anasazi to follow the harvest and to leave or die off if the land fails to support them.

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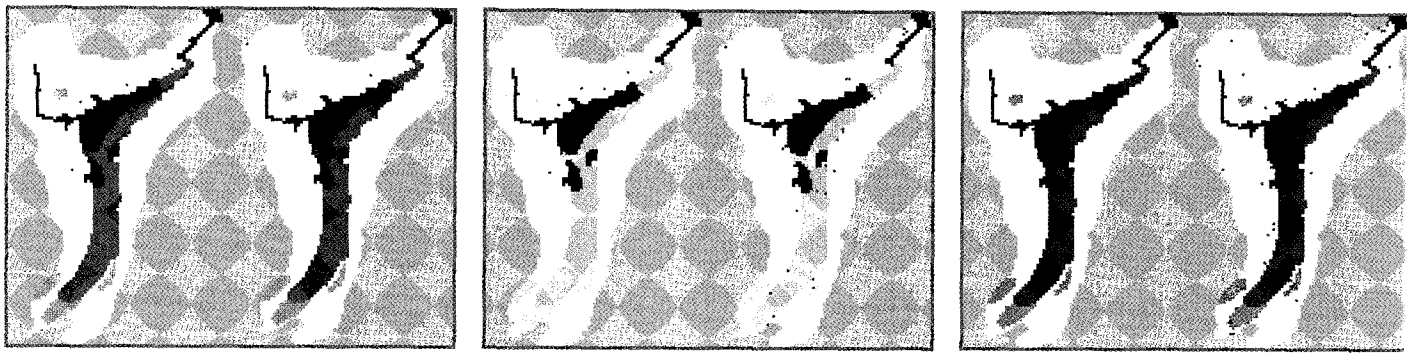

Figure 7.

To see what happens, look at Figure 7, above. You are looking down, as if from a helicopter, on paired images of Long House Valley starting in the year 800. Within the valley blue zones represent places where water is available for farming (darker blue means more water). In both images the red circles represent Anasazi settlements. But—the crucial difference—the right-hand image shows where real Anasazi settlements were, whereas the left-hand one shows where cyber-Anasazi settled.

As always, no two simulations are alike; but once again, this one is pretty typical. In the first frame, as the simulation begins, both the real and the artificial populations are sparse, but the settlements' locations have little in common—to be expected, since this simulation begins randomly. In Frames 2 and 3 (A.D. 855 and A.D. 1021) the real Anasazi population grows and spreads to farmland in the south of the valley; the artificial population also grows and spreads, but with a considerable lag, and the cyber-settlements are more likely than real ones to cling to the edges of fertile zones. Nonetheless, by 1130 (Frame 4) the real and artificial populations look strikingly similar, except that the artificial farmers appear to have overlooked some desirable land in the extreme south. By 1257 (Frame 5) the real population is well along in its decline, and the virtual one continues to track it. (Note that reality and simulation agree that by this point the southern portion of the valley supports only one family, though they disagree about where that family lived.) But in Frame 6, at the end of the period, real history and cyber-history have diverged: the real Anasazi have vanished, whereas several families hang on in the simulation.

What does all this tell us? Nothing for certain; but it suggests two things. First, environmental conditions alone can indeed explain much of what is known about Anasazi population and settlement patterns. Differences between reality and simulation are many; still, given the relative simplicity of the rules and the fact that all but environmental factors are excluded, what is remarkable is how much the simulation manages to look like the real thing. But, second, environmental hardship does not, at least in this model, explain the final disappearance. A steep decline, yes; but a small population could have stayed. Perhaps some unknown force drove them out; or perhaps, more likely, the last few gave up and chose collectively to leave; or perhaps there is a turning point that this first, still relatively crude model has not found.

Even if the modelers fail to explain why the Anasazi left, they will have shown that artificial societies can come within hailing distance of replicating, in a general but suggestive way, the large trends of real societies, and even some of the smaller trends. In Long House Valley, Gumerman and Dean led me up a sandstone slope to the site of the ancient Long House settlement. Gumerman planted himself in the midst of the ruin and put his arms out and shouted, over an icy morning wind that lashed the valley in early spring, "It boggles the mind. More than half the simulations produce the biggest site right here—where the biggest site actually was."

Learning From Lumpiness

"There is no such thing as society," Margaret Thatcher famously said in 1987. "There are individual men and women, and there are families." If all she meant was that in a liberal democracy the individual is sovereign, then she was right. But if she also meant that, as some conservatives believe, the notion of a capital-S Society is a collectivist fiction or a sneaky euphemism for the nanny state, then it appears that she was demonstrably wrong; and the artificial societies I have shown you are the demonstrations. They are, it is true, almost laughably simple by comparison with real people and real societies, but that is exactly the point. If even the crudest toy societies take on a life and a logic of their own, then it must be a safe bet that real societies, too, have their own biographies. Intuition tells us that it is meaningful to speak of Society as something greater than and distinct from the sum of individuals and families, just as it is meaningful to speak of the mind as something greater than and distinct from the sum of brain cells. Intuition appears to be correct.

That, however, should not provide a lot of comfort to liberals and progressives. They like the idea of Society because it is not an It but an Us, a group project. For them, Society can be built like a house, or guided like a child, by a community of enlightened activists and politicians who use their own intuition as a blueprint. Artificial societies suggest that real ones do not behave so manageably. Their logic is

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their own, and they can be influenced but not directed, understood but not anticipated. Not even the Olympian modeler, who writes the code and looks down from on high, can do more than guess at the effect of any particular rule as it ricochets through a world of diverse actors. The diversity of individuals guarantees that society will never be remotely as malleable or as predictable as any person.

Assimilating this style of thinking took me a while, but then I began seeing human society as both more complicated and less strange than before. Many of the seminal changes in American life have been characterized by the sorts of abrupt discontinuities and emergent patterns that also characterize artificial societies. Why, after twenty-five years of rapid growth, did productivity in America suddenly shift to a dramatically lower gear in the early 1970s? That event, probably more than any other, shaped the discontents of the 1970s and the political and social changes that followed, yet conventional economics still has not mustered an accepted explanation. Why did the homicide rate in New York City, after more than a century of relative stability at a remarkably low level, quadruple after 1960? Why did the rate of violent crime in America as a whole triple from 1965 to 1980? Why did the percentage of children born out of wedlock quadruple from 1965 to 1990? Why did crack use explode in the 1980s and then collapse in the 1990s? If we think of societies in terms of straight lines and smooth curves, such landslides and reversals seem mystifying, bizarre; if we think in terms of sand piles and teeming cyber-agents, it seems surprising if avalanches do *not* happen.

Washington, D.C., is a place deeply committed to linearity. Want to cut crime in half? Then double the number of cops or the length of prison sentences. That is how both Washington and the human brain are wired to think. Yet in recent years many people even in Washington have come to understand that something is amiss with straight-line or smooth-curve thinking. In fact, the notion of unintended consequences has become almost a cliché. Policy measures sometimes work more or less as expected, but often they misfire, or backfire. So far the trouble has been that the idea of unintended consequences, important and well founded though it may be, is an intellectual dead end. Just what is one supposed to do about it? One cannot very well never do anything (which, in any case, would have unintended consequences of its own), and one also cannot foresee the unforeseeable. And so Washington shuffles along neurotically in a state of befuddled enlightenment, well aware of the law of unintended consequences but helpless to cope with it.

It is at least possible that with the development of artificial societies, we have an inkling of an instrument that can peer into the black box of unintended consequences. That is not to say that A-societies will ever predict exact events and detailed outcomes in real societies; on the contrary, a fundamental lesson of A-societies seems to be that the only way to forecast the future is to live it. However, A-societies may at least suggest the *kinds* of surprises that could pop up. We won't know when we will be blindsided, but we may well learn which direction we are most likely to be hit from.

Moreover, A-societies may also eventually suggest where to look for the sorts of small interventions that can have large, discontinuous consequences. "It may be that you could learn of minimally costly interventions that will give you a more satisfactory outcome," Thomas Schelling told me—interventions not unlike his trick of reordering the traffic flow in Harvard's stairwells by changing the behavior of a single class. I used to think that the notion of government funding for late-night basketball was silly, or at best symbolic. In fact it may be exactly the right approach, because pulling a few influential boys off the streets and out of trouble might halt a chain reaction among their impressionable peers. It now seems to me that programs like President Clinton's effort to hire 100,000 additional police officers and spread them in a uniform film across every jurisdiction are the gestural, brain-dead ones, because they ignore the world's lumpiness. Increasingly, cops themselves are coming to the same conclusion. More than a few cities have learned (or relearned) that pre-emptively concentrating their efforts on key areas and offenders can dramatically reduce crime across an entire city at comparatively little cost.

The flip side of learning to find small interventions with large returns, and at least as important, is learning to avoid large interventions with small returns. In the stretches between avalanches and other discontinuities, A-societies are

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often surprising not by being capricious but by being much more stable than intuition would suggest. For example, in his model of communal violence Epstein tried adding more and more artificial peacekeepers to see how many were necessary to reliably prevent genocide. The result was disconcerting, to say the least. Even saturating the population with peacekeepers—one for every ten civilians—did not significantly reduce the odds that genocide would ultimately occur; it merely delayed the end. Why? Epstein's artificial peacekeepers are passive, reacting to nearby violence rather than striking pre-emptively; eventually a rash of clustered killings will always overwhelm their ability to respond, at which point the violence quickly gets out of hand. Epstein concludes that simply throwing forces at an ethnic conflict is no answer; intervention needs to anticipate trouble. That, of course, would not have come as news to the reactive and largely ineffective peacekeeping forces in, say, Rwanda, Bosnia, or Sierra Leone. In Rwanda frustrated peacekeepers pleaded for permission to seize arms caches and intimidate extremists before large-scale killing could begin. Their pleas were denied, at a cost apparent in Figure 6. (See "Bystanders to Genocide," by Samantha Power, September 2001 *Atlantic*.)

The science of artificial societies is in its infancy. Whether toy genocides will truly be relevant to real ones remains an open question. But the field is burgeoning, and a lot is going on, some of which will bear fruit. Researchers are creating cyber-models of ancient Indians of Colorado's Mesa Verde and Mexico's Oaxaca Valley; they are creating virtual Polynesian societies and digital mesolithic foragers; they are growing crime waves in artificial neighborhoods, price shocks in artificial financial markets, sudden changes in retirement trends among artificial Social Security recipients, and epidemics caused by bioterrorism. At least two sets of researchers are growing artificial polities in which stable political parties emerge spontaneously (conventional political science has never satisfactorily explained why political parties appear to be a feature of every democracy). To me, the early results of this work suggest that social engineering can never be as effective as liberals hope, but also that it need not be as clumsy as conservatives insist.

Today's universities and think tanks are full of analysts who use multivariate equations to model the effects of changes in tax rates or welfare rules or gun laws or farm subsidies; I can easily envision a time, not long from now, when many of those same analysts will test policy changes not on paper but on artificial Americas that live and grow within computers all over the country, like so many bacterial cultures or fruit-fly populations. The rise and refinement of artificial societies is not going to be a magic mirror, but it promises some hope of seeing, however dimly, around the next corner. ▲

Computer animations of the artificial societies discussed in this article can be viewed online, at www.theatlantic.com/rauch.

TEACHING THE SLIDER

In the middle of life's road, which I notice
keeps getting wider,

he asks me to show him a slider.
Bankrupt, filled with rage, and now caught

on the phone with a merciful woman who isn't his mother,
I slam the phone down,

order him to the back yard,
and pitch. *Don't push off, separate,*

because it's how you separate yourself from the mound,
it's all in the follow-through.

I come straight over the top.
They break smoothly, cleanly,

as I broke them off once, like knives outlining my victims.
He tries, is all legs and arms. His hands

half the span of mine, sneaks untied,
he's a present coming unwrapped. *No,*

you're not coming all the way through.
You need to fall through your body

as if it weren't there. You need to plunge
down the steps your legs and back make

and then the ball will break
and fall off the end of the world

no matter what and after that
your body can burst into flames

for all I care and I come through
and the ball cracks his glove, knocks it off.

He picks up my hand, turns my fingers,
touches my face, horrified.

He says he wants me to show him again
how to fall through your body

and burst into flames.

—J. T. BARBARESE

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DANCES WITH DAFFODILS

A fanciful form of wordplay known as "N plus 7" can be surprisingly effective at exposing literary pretense

BY PHYLLIS ROSE

Illustrations by Steve Moors

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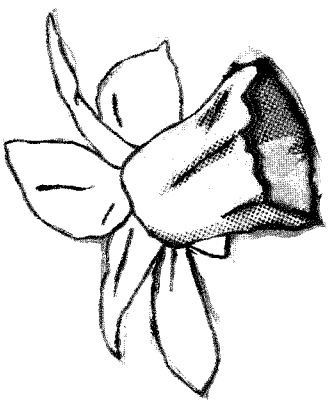

Wordsworth's best-known and arguably most ridiculous poem is "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," the one about the daffodils. When daffodils are blooming, it is impossible not to think of this poem—although, at the same time, it is impossible to think of it. The language, with a few exceptions, is forgettable. Students from countries with no daffodils and a history of British rule have come to resent the daffodil poem as an artifact of cultural imperialism. Imagine never having seen daffodils and having to sit in school and mimic enthusiasm about their "fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

My favorite recent commentary on this poem is a version of it presented by the writer Harry Mathews at a lecture on the Oulipo in 1999, in Key West, Florida. The Oulipo, or OuLiPo, which stands for Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (Workshop of Potential Literature), is a French-based group interested in formally generated literature and relatively uninterested in literature that purports to describe the "real" world or that even pretends to be the product of sincere feeling. Oulipians set themselves rules—writing a novel without once using the letter *e*, for example—and pride themselves on the depth and interest produced despite (an Oulipian would probably say produced because of) the restrictions.

Harry Mathews performed an Oulipian exercise called "N plus 7" on the Wordsworth poem. "N" stands for "noun." To use the method on prose, one locates in the dictionary a noun found in the subject text, counts to the seventh noun from it, and substitutes that for the original. With poetry, especially classical poetry, one may choose to respect the meter and rhyme of the poem being transformed, in which case one would examine every noun (excluding proper nouns) after the seventh one until finding a match. The alphabetical gap between the original and the substitution, therefore, can be quite large. Mathews, who respected Wordsworth's meter and rhyme in his N-plus-7 version of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," had to traverse many dictionary entries before finding a noun that rhymed with "daffodil" and was, like "daffodil," a dactyl—three syllables with the accent on the first syllable. The word he came upon was "imbecile."

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden imbeciles;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the imbeciles.

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Some people in the audience, including me, found this so funny that we bent over with laughter even as Mathews, a tall, handsome man with a very grand stage presence, proceeded straight-faced and stately through the poem.

Mathews has no qualms about dissing Wordsworth. Indeed, he can't understand how anyone who takes literature seriously and cares about words can not disrespect Wordsworth. As he told me on the phone shortly after the reading, he holds Wordsworth responsible for the largely mistaken direction of most modern literature. Before Wordsworth and the Romantic poets, he said, personal feelings were just a small part of what literature addressed. Because of Wordsworth, emotions became *the* subject of literature: sincerity moved to the center of the literary enterprise, and to be morally responsible meant that one had to account for one's feelings. "It's all so nauseatingly bourgeois."

"I also hate him for the hypocrisy of his theoretical positions," Mathews said, warming to his subject. He was thinking especially of Wordsworth's pronouncement, in his 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, that the language of poetry should be the "language really used by men." "'Language that men really use.' What could be more 'poetic,' more literary, than Wordsworth's language? If only he had used simple, unpoetic language. If someone had come along capable of combining the intricacies of Milton's prosody with genuinely simple diction, wouldn't that have been something?"

I tried to perform N plus 7 myself, but I had no print dictionary on hand, and I quickly realized that with an online dictionary the technique is impossible. Without a linear, alphabetically organized text, one can't count seven nouns ahead. The words are all there, but their relationship to one another is that of points in a circle of which the researcher is the center.

Since I could not play Mathews's game, I decided to play what game I could. I looked up "daffodil."

"Daffodil," the online *Oxford English Dictionary* says, is a variant of "affodill," with the initial *d* insufficiently accounted for. Perhaps it comes from the French "*de*," as in "*fleur d'affrodille*," but it may come from a linguistic tendency for words beginning in *a* to pick up an initial *d* or *t*—as "aunt" becomes "*tante*." As for "affodill," it is derived from "asphodel," a flower entirely different from the daffodil, which is, unlike the asphodel, a relative of the narcissus. The *OED* entries read as though we all had affodills and asphodels growing in our gardens, and I found myself feeling as left out and irritated as any postcolonial student. So I looked up "imbecile." It means "physically weak or impotent," and the modern instance ("imbecile" as a noun) is a "nonce-use" from the adjective that has no historical connection to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century usages that are the earliest ones recorded. "Nonce-use?"

While I was playing lexical hopscotch, an e-mail arrived from the thoughtful and generous Harry Mathews containing the entry on N plus 7 from the *Oulipo Compendium*, a reference work that he edited with Alastair Brotchie. It explained that the results one gets differ tremendously depending on the dictionary used. The smaller the dictionary, the larger the alphabetical gap between word and replacement. Thus the opening of the Book of Genesis, using *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, Unabridged*, to replace all the nouns, becomes "In the beguinage God created the hebdomad and the earthfall. And the earthfall was without formalization, and void; and darnex was upon the facette of the deerhair." Using *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, which is smaller, produces "In the behest God created the heckelphone and the easement. And the easement was without format, and void; and darshan was upon the facial of the defeasance."

The "N plus 7" entry in the *Oulipo Compendium* included Mathews's version of the daffodil poem, titled "The Imbeciles," and I found there was much more to it than I had recalled. Not just "daffodil" but every noun in the poem had been replaced by another noun at least seven entries along.

> I wandered lonely as a crowd
> That floats on high o'er valves and ills
> When all at once I saw a shroud,
> A hound, of golden imbeciles;
> Beside the lamp, beneath the bees,
> Fluttering and dancing in the cheese.
>
> Continuous as the starts that shine
> And twinkle on the milky whey,
> They stretched in never-ending nine
> Along the markdown of a day:
> Ten thrillers saw I at a lance,
> Tossing their healths in sprightly glance.
>
> The wealths beside them danced; but they
> Out-did the sparkling wealths in key:
> A poker could not but be gay,
> In such a jocund constancy:
> I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
> What weave to me the shred had brought:
>
> For oft, when on my count I lie
> In vacant or in pensive nude,
> They flash upon that inward fly
> Which is the block of turpitude;
> And then my heat with plenty fills
> And dances with the imbeciles.

Langenscheidt's Standard English-German Dictionary, with its compact range of English nouns, was responsible for the especially felicitous gaps between original and substitution, the blissfully ridiculous "Fluttering and dancing in the cheese" and "that inward fly / Which is the block of turpitude."

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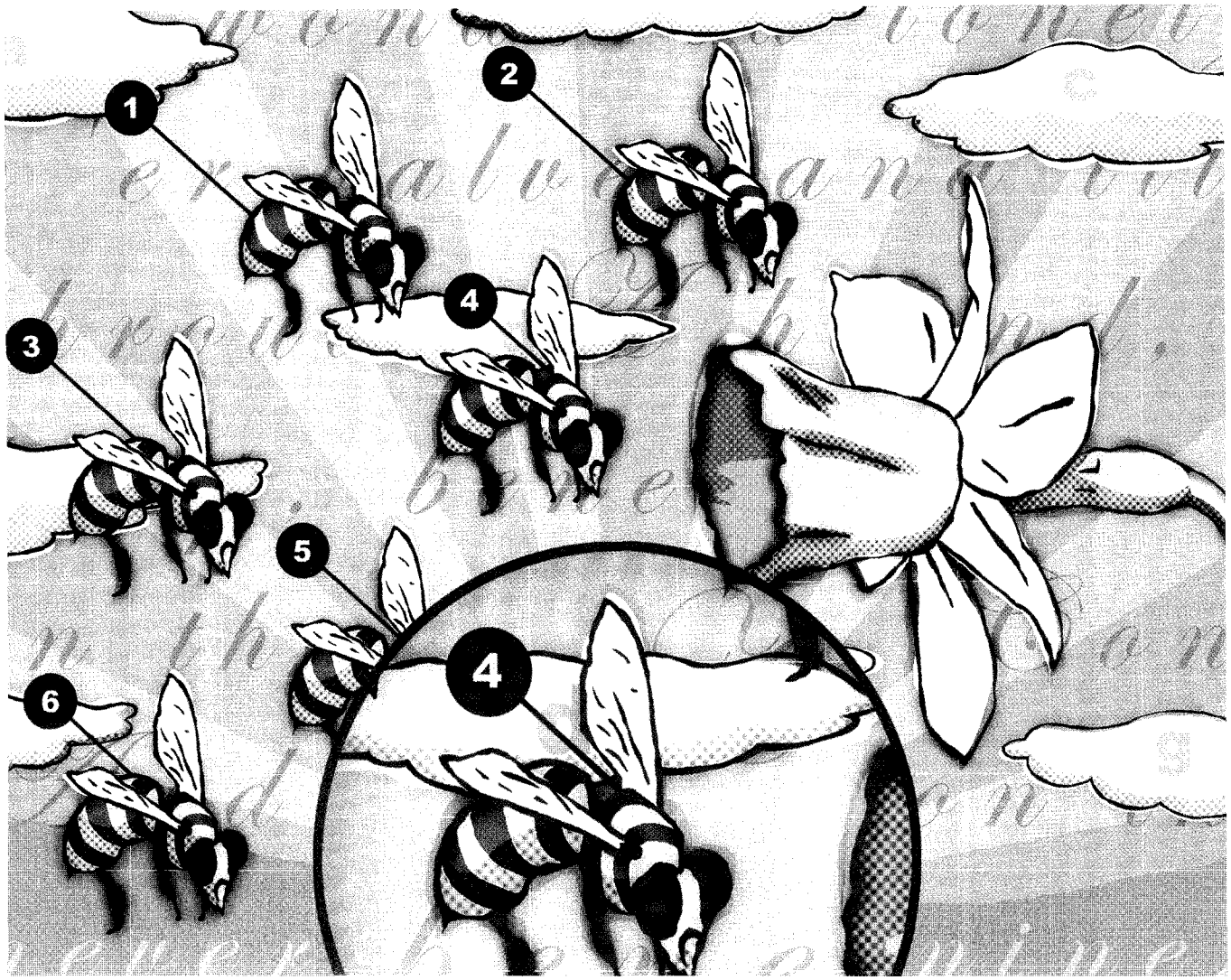

On *The New Detectives*, a TV show about forensic scientists to which I am addicted, a substance called luminol often comes into play. If luminol is sprayed on a crime scene and subjected to ultraviolet light, invisible bloodstains become visible. The Oulipian N plus 7, applied to the Wordsworth poem, was like luminol exposing the presence of falseness, banality, poeticism, and sentimentality. How much more provocative, incisive, and flat-out interesting is "never-ending nine" than "never-ending line"? "Markdown of a day" than "margin of a bay"? "Lonely as a crowd" than "lonely as a cloud"? As for "floats on high o'er vales and hills"—please! This is the guy who rejected poetic diction?

The N-plus-7 technique exploits the ability of a language to convey meaning even if we don't know the significance of individual words—a trait that allows us, as toddlers, to acquire language in the first place, gradually enlarging our vocabulary. It also exploits the vulnerability of writing to easy parody through the substitution of nouns. Take "To the Outhouse," the title one of my students gave to a parody of Virginia Woolf. Like many parodies, it seems almost effortlessly to suggest a literary critique, the earthiness of "outhouse" rebuking Woolf's tendency toward highfalutin, bodiless aestheticism. The relationship of noun to noun carries the critique, and because the writer's characteristic sound is embedded in both the syntax and the residual vocabulary, we don't have to make literal sense of the word "wealths" in this context to know that "The wealths beside them danced; but they / Out-did the sparkling wealths in key" is an intrinsically phony line.

One thing N plus 7 teaches us is that nonsense is not silly but pretense is. It's no accident that Lewis Carroll produced work—notably "The Hunting of the Snark" and "Jabberwocky"—in the spirit of the later Oulipian N-plus-7 exercises. Like many members of the Oulipo, Carroll was a mathematician and was uninterested in trying to represent a literary reality. Yet I retain the exact words of ""Twas brillig, and the slithy toves / Did gyre and gimble in the wabe," whereas I have trouble remembering "Ten thousand saw I at a glance, / Tossing their heads in sprightly dance." And if I had the choice, I'd rather gyre and gimble with the slithy toves and slay the Jabberwock any old frabjous day.

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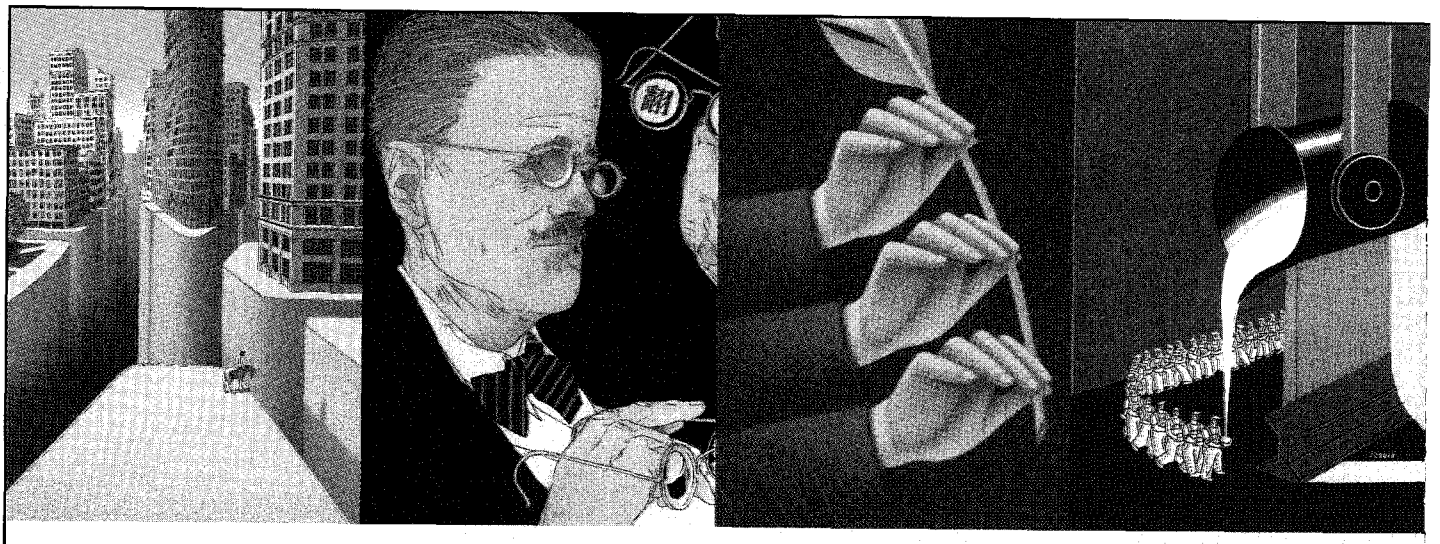

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NIXON AND THE CHIEFS

In the last days of 1971 President Richard Nixon and his closest aides met to discuss the astonishing discovery that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been spying on the White House. Transcripts of Nixon's secret tapes of these meetings, published here for the first time, offer a case study in Nixon's paranoid style of governing—and his surprisingly successful efforts to salvage advantage from misfortune

BY JAMES ROSEN

Illustrations by Edward Sorel

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At 6:09 on the evening of December 21, 1971, President Richard Nixon convened a tense and confidential meeting in the Oval Office with his three closest advisers—John N. Mitchell, his Attorney General; H. R. Haldeman, his chief of staff; and John D. Ehrlichman, his top domestic-policy aide. Notably absent was Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national-security adviser. The men had come together to discuss a crisis unique in American presidential history—"a federal offense of the highest order," as Nixon would put it in the meeting. Just days before, Yeoman Charles E. Radford, a young Navy stenographer who had been working with Kissinger and his staff, had confessed to a Department of Defense interrogator that for more than a year he had been passing thousands of top-secret Nixon-Kissinger documents to his superiors at the Pentagon. Radford had obtained the documents by systematically rifling through burn bags, interoffice envelopes, and even the briefcases of Kissinger and Kissinger's then-deputy, Brigadier General Alexander Haig. According to Radford, his supervisors—first Rear Admiral Rembrandt C. Robinson and then Rear Admiral Robert O. Welander—had routinely passed the ill-gotten documents to Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and sometimes to Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, the chief of naval operations. It was, in short, an unprecedented case of espionage that pitted the nation's top military commanders against their civilian commander in chief during wartime. Nixon and his advisers had gathered to consider how to react.

The Joint Chiefs' espionage effort was not born in a vacuum. Nixon's style of governance was highly secretive, and his presidency hung precariously on the constantly shifting lines of "back-channel" communication that he encouraged among Kissinger, Haig, the Joint Chiefs, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, and Secretary of State William Rogers. The military often felt cut out of crucial decision-making on matters of national security, foreign policy, and the conduct of the war in Vietnam. In his 1976 memoir, *On Watch*, Admiral Zumwalt lamented "the deliberate, systematic and, unfortunately, extremely successful efforts of the President, Henry Kissinger, and a few subordinate members of their inner circle to conceal, sometimes by simple silence, more often by articulate deceit, their real policies about the most critical matters of national security." Scarcely alone in his views, Zumwalt marveled "that rational men could think that running things like that could have any other result than 'leaks' and 'spying' and all-around paranoia." Indeed, he said, "they had created a system in which 'leaks' and 'spying' were everyday and essential elements."

The espionage case ultimately came to be known as the Moorer-Radford affair. Although the details of the story may be new to many readers, historians and journalists have written about Nixon's handling of the affair—most notably Seymour M. Hersh, in *The Price of Power* (1983), and Len Colodny and Robert Gettlin, in *Silent Coup* (1991). Until now, however, chronicles of the White House's reaction have mostly been derived from the selective memories of

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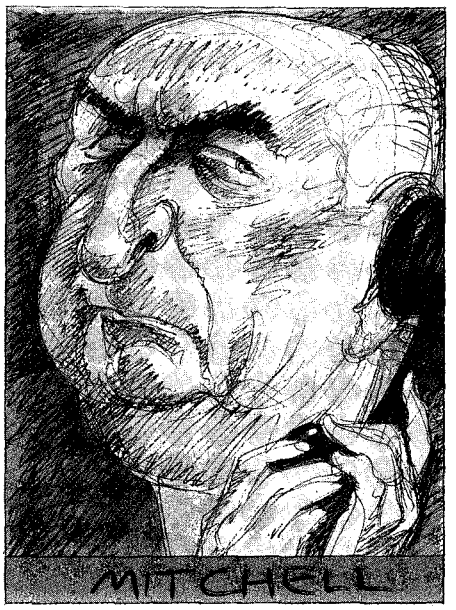
some of those involved (including Radford, who has spoken to the press)—and have therefore proved either incomplete or less than fully reliable. But in October of 2000 the secret tapes that Nixon made of his initial conversations about the affair were declassified and released for public access, buried amid 420 hours of other Nixon recordings. Published here for the first time, excerpted transcripts of those conversations do much more than fill out the historical record. In fact, they offer an absorbing case study in the behavior and tactics of Richard Nixon under fire, trying to cope with a potential disaster of his own making. "Damn," he exclaimed to Haldeman on the day following that first meeting, as the details began to unfold. "You know, I created this whole situation, this—this lesion. It's just unbelievable. Unbelievable."

The tapes show that Nixon was stunned by Radford's revelations. He pounded his desk in anger. He spoke gravely about prosecuting Admiral Moorer, along with others involved. He voiced deep suspicion about the role played by Haig, who had personally selected Radford to accompany him and Kissinger on the foreign trips during which Radford had done his greatest damage. Nixon pronounced Kissinger, his national-security adviser, a threat to security. And yet within days he had developed a strategy for handling the affair that not only averted a major public crisis—which is where most Presidents would have been content to stop—but also skillfully salvaged advantage from misfortune and furthered his personal and political agendas.



Shaped considerably by Attorney General Mitchell, Nixon's response to the Moorer-Radford affair essentially consisted of covering it up, transferring Admiral Welander and Yeoman Radford to remote posts, and, daringly, retaining Moorer as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. The President—who had alternately conspired with and against the Chiefs—"had two ways of going," as Ehrlichman later recalled. "He could either tear up the Joint Chiefs or he could continue to do business with them." Nixon chose the latter, figuring, in Ehrlichman's words, that Moorer would from then on be a "preshrunk" admiral over whom Nixon could exert increased influence. Indeed, within days of the first White House meeting about the affair, having recovered from the shock of the revelations, Nixon and Kissinger were already plotting how to use Moorer's diminished status to further a secret policy goal. Nixon also reckoned that disclosing the scandal could irreparably damage the armed services—something he felt the country could ill afford in the Vietnam era.

The strategy clearly worked—Nixon gained an increased measure of control over the Joint Chiefs (in particular over Moorer, whom he reappointed Chairman six months later) and kept his various back channels in place; when the Moorer-Radford story broke, in January of 1974, a scandal-weary nation scarcely noticed. In 1986, recalling Nixon's handling of the affair, John Mitchell summed the matter up succinctly: "Richard Nixon was smarter than hell to sit on this thing."

Or was he? In burying the scandal, some historians have written, Nixon and his men perhaps sealed his subsequent fate as President. By allowing a cast of characters he distrusted, and who distrusted him, to remain in place in the White House and in the Pentagon, Nixon virtually ensured that the culture of secrecy and paranoia that infused his first term would persist until the Watergate scandal prematurely ended his presidency.

"Can I ask how in the name of God do we have a yeoman having access to documents of that type?" Nixon demanded of his aides at that initial meeting on the evening of December 21.

"Well, he's the key man," Ehrlichman answered. "He's the fellow that typed all the memcons—the memoranda, the conversations." Ehrlichman went on to say that Radford had kept the Joint Chiefs informed about "contingency plans, political agreements, troop movements, behind-the-scenes politics, security conferences between our government and foreign governments, et cetera." He added, "This sailor is a veritable storehouse of information of all kinds, as he reads and retains everything that comes through. He testified that he knew about Henry's secret negotiations with the North Vietnamese." He later said, "This guy was trained. He can tell you exactly the sequence in which he Xeroxed things, he moved to this room, to that room ... and he just has total recall."

"Under the implied approval of his supervisor, the admiral," Ehrlichman said at another point in the conversation, Radford "has systematically stolen documents out of Henry's briefcase, Haig's briefcase, people's desks—anyplace and everyplace in the NSC apparatus that he could get his hands on—and has duplicated them and turned them over to the Joint Chiefs, through his boss." He added, "This has been going on now for about thirteen months."

In a meeting on December 23 Ehrlichman explained to Nixon the motivation for espionage. "The Joint Chiefs had Henry's talking papers for meetings ahead of time," he said. "This yeoman could be sent into ... the NSC paper mill to

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pull out what the staff was recommending to Henry on decision papers that were coming to you, in advance of the decisions ... So that in fact the Joint Chiefs were getting advances on where weaknesses were in their case in a decision that was coming to you, ahead of it ever getting here."

Even in the initial Moorer-Radford meeting, on December 21, Nixon had already begun to develop suspicions about the complicity of some of his staff in the espionage. He asked Ehrlichman what Haig, in particular, might have known.

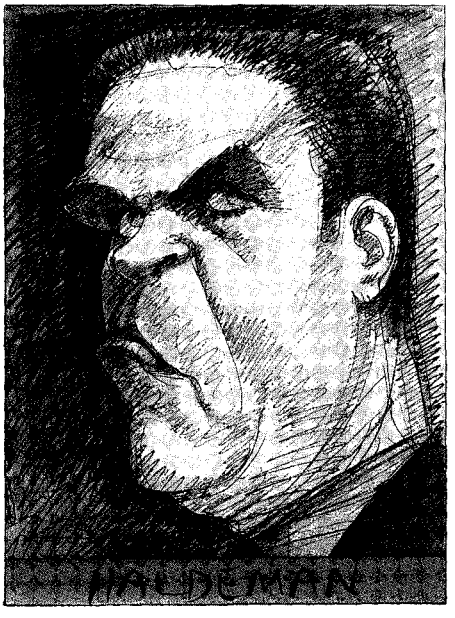
"I don't know," Ehrlichman said. "I suspect Haig may be aware, but by back-channel basis ... If this thing runs true to form, undoubtedly his radar has picked this up by now."

Throughout the meeting Nixon kept returning to Haig. "I'm afraid that Haig must have known about this operation," he said at one point. "It seems unlikely he wouldn't have known." At another point he asked, "Is Haig wiretapped?"

"Why not?" Haldeman replied, taking Nixon's question as a suggestion.

"It's not going to hurt anyone at all," Mitchell added.

But Nixon never ordered a wiretap on Haig. Although he clearly believed that Haig had condoned Radford's treachery, Nixon could not believe that Haig had sanctioned its most brazen manifestation. "Taking stuff out of Henry's briefcase!" Nixon said to his men. "I mean, Haig would never approve that." The others agreed.



But Nixon was not thinking about Haig simply on a personal level; he was also thinking about him in tactical terms. By December 23 Nixon had apparently decided that Haig's value as a bridge to the Pentagon, and as a counterbalancing force for reining in the notoriously mercurial Kissinger, outweighed any need to probe further into the general's role in the spying operation. "We are going to continue to handle the Chiefs ... through Haig," Nixon told Haldeman and Ehrlichman. "But we'll let them know what they're *supposed* to know."

After Ehrlichman's briefing on December 21, Mitchell weighed in. "Mr. President," he said, "I'd like to point out that this thing goes right into the Joint Chiefs of Staff ... The important thing in my way of thinking is to stop this Joint Chiefs of Staff operation, and to buck up the security over here." The Attorney General described the case in distinctly criminal terms.

> NIXON: [Welander] had to know he was getting stuff from Kissinger's and Haig's briefcases. That is wrong! Understand? I'm just saying that's wrong. Do you agree?
>
> MITCHELL: No question about it, that the whole concept of having this yeoman get into this affair and start to get this stuff back to the Joint Chiefs of Staff is just like coming in and robbing your desk.
>
> NIXON: Yes it is.

Infuriated, Nixon had earlier reminded Mitchell that "prosecuting is a possibility for the Joint Chiefs." (In a meeting the next day Nixon revealed that he had more in mind than damage control, the prosecution of the wrongdoers, or even personal revenge. He was already thinking about how to manipulate the situation to his advantage. He told his advisers, "We ought to ... use this as a device, of course, to clean out the Joint Chiefs operation.")

Mitchell calmly steered Nixon away from pursuing prosecution. "I agree with you," he said, "but we have to take it from there as to what this would lead to if you pursued it by way of prosecution of Moorer." Their exchange continued:

> MITCHELL: What has been done has been done. I think that the important thing is to paper this thing over.
>
> NIXON: Hmmph!
>
> MITCHELL: This way—first of all, get that liaison office the hell out of NSC and put it back at the Pentagon.
>
> NIXON: Correct.
>
> MITCHELL: Secondly, get a security officer into the NSC.
>
> NIXON: Correct. Well, what about Henry Kissinger?
>
> MITCHELL: Well, I think that whoever goes in there is going to have to ride herd not only on the rest of the staff but on Henry ... With respect to the Joint Chiefs, you have to get, in my opinion, this guy Admiral Welander the hell out of there, by way of a signal. That way you can transfer him to Kokomo, or Indiana, or anywhere we want to have him, along, of course, with this yeoman. And I think the best thing to do is for me—and we'll leave Laird aside for a moment—but for me to sit down with Tom Moorer, and point out what this scene is that's been going on, and it's the end of the road ... This ball game's over with.

Nixon agreed. "I think the strategy you suggested is the one that I would pursue," he said, adding that Mitchell should—"on my behalf"—establish "a direct line to Moorer." He continued, "Don't tell Laird. Laird is liable to screw around, and then one way it will blow."

As for Kissinger, Nixon was dismissive: "Henry is not a good security risk." Nixon said he would brook no "crying" by Kissinger, and added, "I don't want Henry to raise this subject with me here—or he's out." Two days later Nixon told Haldeman, "I will not have Henry in here with his childish antics. I will not discuss it. Just say you're handling this with Mitchell."

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During the night of December 21 the President somehow managed to convince himself that Yeoman Radford had acted of his own volition, and not at the behest of higher-ups. In a meeting the following morning Ehrlichman and Mitchell worked swiftly to disabuse Nixon of this fantasy.

NIXON: The important thing is to handle [Radford's superiors] in a way that *they* do not talk.

EHRLICHMAN: [Inaudible] their career, and I suspect that that's enough leverage—

NIXON: And they're probably loyal fellows.

EHRLICHMAN: I suspect so.

NIXON: They're just doing it for—for the service.

EHRLICHMAN: Right.

NIXON: This fellow—I think they'd be shocked to know what this guy did.

EHRLICHMAN: Well, they *know*! They're the ones—

NIXON: But do they know about the fact that—

EHRLICHMAN: Absolutely! Oh, absolutely! See, they ... uh, *used* him!

NIXON: And they knew that he was stealing from Kissinger?

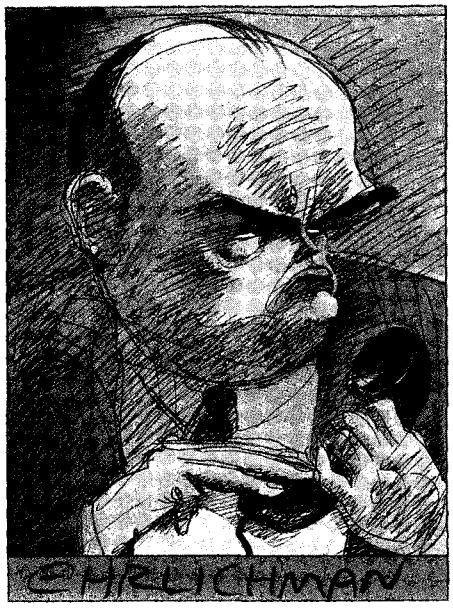
EHRLICHMAN: Oh, they had to! They had to.

NIXON: Jesus Christ!

EHRLICHMAN: I don't, I just don't see any escape from them being included.

NIXON: Well, they—that's the reason they need to be transferred. If they knew he was stealing from Kissinger ...

MITCHELL: This is the only way you're going to have a deterrent on future such operations.



But by this time Nixon viewed a full rupture with the Joint Chiefs as unthinkable, for strategic reasons. "You have to realize," he told Haldeman and Ehrlichman on December 23, "that the channel to the Chiefs is something we cannot lose. Ever." If this meant that Admiral Moorer would escape the affair unpunished, then so be it. It was a prospect that agonized Ehrlichman. "I lost more sleep [over] what to do with this guy," he told Nixon. "And I have finally come to the conclusion that you can't touch him."

"I agree," Nixon replied. "We can't touch him, because it hurts the Joint Chiefs. The Joint Chiefs, the military, et cetera—not to be viewed as our enemy. We cannot have it."

Nixon remained focused on Radford, convinced that transferring him was not enough. "One thing that I'd be worried about," he fretted to Mitchell and Ehrlichman on December 22, was that "this guy is a potential [Daniel] Ellsberg." This was a reference to the Defense Department consultant who, six months earlier, had leaked the Pentagon Papers, a classified study of documents relating to America's involvement in Vietnam from World War II to 1968. "He knows more than even Ellsberg knows ... Is there any way that we can keep him scared to death, so that he doesn't get off and think, 'Oh, I'm now going to write the book?'" Nixon added, "I think [Radford's] got to be told that a criminal offense hangs over him, that it's going to hang over him ... I'd like to scare the son of a bitch to death!"

Nixon had a habit of viewing scandals that occurred during his presidency through the prism of the Alger Hiss spy case, in which Nixon had first gained national fame, and around which there had long been unsubstantiated whispers that Hiss was a homosexual. The Moorer-Radford affair was no exception. Observing that homosexuality "poisons a lot of these things," Nixon ordered Mitchell to explore whether Radford was sexually involved with the prominent syndicated columnist Jack Anderson. (It was a high-level leak to Anderson, detailing Nixon's covert "tilt" toward Pakistan in its December 1971 war with India, that had first led investigators to Radford. The yeoman and the columnist, both Mormons, acknowledged knowing each other, but both denied that Radford was Anderson's source. Under interrogation, however, Radford surprised everybody by confessing to spying for the Pentagon.)

Nixon thought the Radford-Anderson relationship was "sexual up the ass," and he wondered whether Anderson had Radford "under blackmail." Ehrlichman followed up on Nixon's order, but investigators balked, and the idea was dropped.

Haldeman contributed little to the December 21 meeting, with one notable exception: with Ehrlichman, he raised the specter of more-pervasive military malfeasance.

EHRLICHMAN: The thing that disgusts me about this is, if they'll do that—

NIXON: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: What else are they doing?

EHRLICHMAN: What else are they doing? You got military drivers, military gals, military everything around here.

NIXON: Yup, yup, yup, yup.

HALDEMAN: Christ. We've all used this office.

Such suspicions later proved well founded. A previously unpublished Senate Watergate committee memorandum, dated December 5, 1973, and addressed to Fred Thompson, the committee's minority counsel (now a U.S. senator from Tennessee), noted that the investigation of Radford had turned up "another person on the NSC staff who was helping" him, named David Oscar Bowles. Like Radford, Bowles was swiftly transferred—to Corpus Christi. But unlike Radford, Bowles has never spoken on the record about his role in the military

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espionage; indeed, until now his alleged involvement in the Moorer-Radford affair has never been publicly disclosed.

On the afternoon of December 23 Ehrlichman briefed Nixon again, this time on the results of Mitchell's sit-down with Moorer.

EHRLICHMAN: Admiral Moorer feels that [Welander] should go to jail! For all the terrible things he's been doing over here! ... [Mitchell] said that Moorer admits that he saw stuff, but that he operated on the assumption that his liaison man was working this all out with Henry ... I said, "Well, did you get a plea of guilty or a not guilty?" And [Mitchell] says, "I got a nolo contendere."

NIXON: [Did Mitchell] tell him about the briefcases and all that?

EHRLICHMAN: Yup.

NIXON: And?

EHRLICHMAN: Moorer said, "Why, that's shocking." Told him, "Whoever did that should go to jail."

Two hours later Haldeman briefed the President on Ehrlichman's attempt to break all of this news to Kissinger. Nixon, working hard to assess the mood of the various parties to the affair, asked what Kissinger—a primary target of the spying—had said about the prospect of criminal prosecutions in the case. Haldeman reported that Kissinger had asked Ehrlichman, "What do you do on that?," to which Ehrlichman had responded, "Well, that's, that's the question now. It's in the hands of the Attorney General, and he has got to determine what we do. Obviously, Admiral Welander thinks that we should put the yeoman in jail; Admiral Moorer thinks we should put Welander in jail." Haldeman said that Kissinger thought Moorer should go to jail. "John and I both laughed," Haldeman told the President, "and said as you go up the ladder, everybody's going to crucify the guy under him, and nobody'll take the blame himself."

As his knowledge of the affair deepened, the President realized that despite his aversion to personal confrontations, he would have to address it directly with many of those involved. He chose to do so by telephone, with Christmas as his pretext for reaching out. The recipients of Nixon's calls got different messages, delivered with varying doses of circumlocution and subtlety.

First came Haig, shortly after 5:00 P.M. on Christmas Eve. Hoping to preserve his informal channel to the military through Haig, Nixon sought at the outset to allay any fear of repercussions for what he had that first evening called the "curiousness" of Haig's involvement in the affair.

NIXON: Just called to wish you a merry Christmas.

HAIG: Oh, God bless you—

NIXON: And also to tell you not to worry about all this, er—not to—you, you mustn't, uh, uh—I could see Henry's in one of his, uh, sort of doldrums.

After warming up with some criticism of Kissinger, Nixon returned to the Moorer-Radford affair. His primary message was meant not for Haig but for Moorer: no action would be taken against the admiral—for now—but Moorer might not be reappointed when his term as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs expired, the following July. During the conversation Haig expressed no surprise at the espionage.

NIXON: But, uh—on the other thing, incidentally, on the Moorer thing. That's just—you just couldn't even dream of having Moorer out of that thing. I mean, he's part of a system. And the damn thing, I'm sure, started before he was there.

HAIG: That's right.

NIXON: I think—I think it goes back over years, and it probably went further than he ever expected it was gonna go. That's my guess.

HAIG: That's what I think, sir—

NIXON: And I—we gotta remember that, basically, he's our ally, in terms of what we believe in. And the worst thing we can do now is to hurt the military. I—I tried to get [that] through Henry's head. But—but that's what, that's the line we're playing on today.

HAIG: Sure.

NIXON: Don't you agree?

HAIG: Absolutely.

NIXON: We [have] just got to do that. And in June, of course, we can take a look—but not now ... After all, Moorer's a good man, and he's with us. This thing, of course, is pretty bad! It's, uh—understand: not the, not sending the information over [to the Pentagon], but goin' through briefcases. That goes too far!

In another talk with Haig, two days later, Nixon offered more reassuring words for Moorer's consumption. He wondered whether Moorer "thinks maybe now he's blown it." Nixon emphatically answered his own question. "He hasn't," he said. "He hasn't."

Minutes after his Christmas Eve conversation with Haig, Nixon had John Mitchell on the line. Their talk began with a discussion of "the Hoffa thing": Nixon's controversial commutation of the prison sentence of the former Teamsters leader Jimmy Hoffa. With Hoffa and Radford in mind, the President offered Mitchell—the man destined to become, after Watergate, the highest-ranking U.S. official ever to be incarcerated—some eerily prophetic words.

NIXON: I'll tell you, being in prison isn't, isn't all that, uh, that it's cracked up to be. You have some lonely days.

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MITCHELL: I would certainly believe it ...

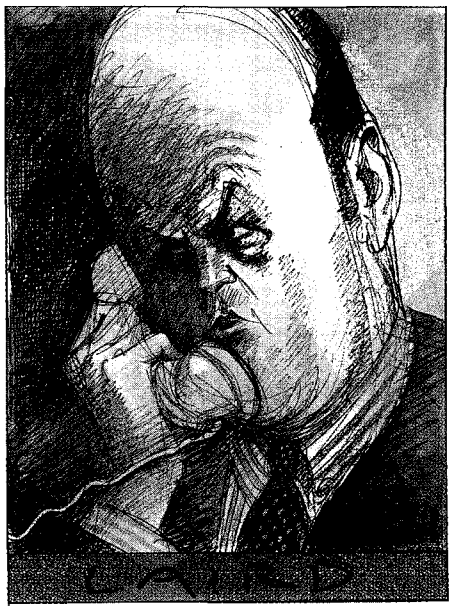
NIXON: Incidentally, on our other subject [the Moorer-Radford affair], I think we are better advised—I mean to—we've really just got to keep the lid on it ... keep it under as close control as we can. But I, uh—we cannot move to do anything to discredit the uniform. That's what I'm convinced of.

MITCHELL: Absolutely ... I have talked to Mel Laird, and ... he made a very interesting point. [Laird told Mitchell] "Come on over here one day into the Pentagon. I want to show you some of the memorandums that I've written to Henry about this and just warned him of it, to just cut it off"... He's actually backed up with [copies], maybe self-serving.

NIXON: Isn't that interesting!

MITCHELL: It is interesting ... 'cause of the daily jealousy of your direct approach to the Joint Chiefs.

NIXON: I know, I know ... I think it's important to—for Henry to sort of cool off and, and recognize that our best interests are served by not raising holy hell.



On Christmas Day, Nixon rang the concerned party he trusted least: Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. After delivering holiday greetings the President artlessly made a transition to the Moorer-Radford affair.

NIXON: Oh, incidentally, on that, er, matter that you're familiar with, er—

LAIRD: Yes.

NIXON: I think it's very important, and I've given the orders around to everybody, that we not allow this thing to hurt the military. You know, we, we know it's wrong—

LAIRD: I know.

NIXON: —but we must cut it. So we gotta clean it up, but we gotta stand by Moorer and these fellows, because they are good guys. They just—they just got trapped in a system that was bad.

LAIRD: Bad, bad.

NIXON: Don't you agree?

LAIRD: I agree, Mr. President.

Well aware of Nixon's distrust, Laird portrayed himself as disappointed by the Moorer-Radford affair, and sought to remind Nixon that he had tried, in 1968, to eliminate the office for which Radford worked. Nixon was having none of it; he spoke more sharply to Laird than he had, for example, to Haig.

NIXON: As you pointed out to Mitchell, apparently, eh, you knew about this years ago. This has been goin' on for years! And they—

LAIRD: Yeah.

NIXON:—and it's just surprising they had it now, and I just think it's the way the system works.

LAIRD: Well—

NIXON: But now that it's done, we'll, uh—

LAIRD: ... I'm just gonna stay out of it now, and just shut it off.

NIXON: Absolutely. Leave it. Stay out of it, and let Mitchell do whatever has to be done. That way, we can stay sort of apart from it. Because we've got to work with these fellows, you know.

LAIRD: It is important.

NIXON: Particularly with Tom Moorer.

LAIRD: Right. And he's mine. You know, it's just too bad that—

NIXON: He's a good man.

Seven days later, on New Year's Day 1972, while spending the day preparing for a one-hour prime-time interview with Dan Rather, Nixon made another Moorer-Radford call, to Henry Kissinger. Punctuated by Kissinger's trademark flattery ("You do these office press conferences so damned *vell*!"), their talk focused mostly on when to disclose that Hanoi had rejected a recent peace overture. Nixon also wanted Kissinger to secure Laird's agreement to end the draft. "Go back to Laird and see if we can get the no-more-draftees thing," he said. Kissinger responded by suggesting a more secretive approach.

KISSINGER: Mr. President, I have almost reached the point where you may have to do this without telling Laird beforehand.

NIXON: Whoa! Couldn't do that, Henry, he'd go up, he'd just—

KISSINGER: He'd go up the wall. But, uh—

NIXON: But you're afraid he's going to leak it out, huh?

KISSINGER: But I'm afraid he's going to come back with so many caveats.

Kissinger had an idea that appealed to Nixon. "Let me talk to Moorer," he said. "He owes us one." "*He sure does*," Nixon replied, confirming Ehrlichman's assessment that the President sought to use the Moorer-Radford affair as leverage with Moorer, his "preshrunk" admiral. Of this gambit Nixon told Kissinger, "Keep it in greatest of confidence."

Nixon and Kissinger had come full circle. Less than two weeks after learning of the espionage, which Nixon had termed a "lesion" created by his own machinations in the Oval Office, the President was plotting with Kissinger, whom he had so recently described as "not a good security risk," to make use of a back channel to the Joint Chiefs and to circumvent the Secretary of Defense.

In the murky Cold War milieu in which he had come to power, Nixon apparently saw such deception as integral to the practice of politics and governance. The new Nixon

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tapes confirm this. In an almost comic conversation with Haldeman on December 22, in the midst of the Moorer-Radford discussions, Nixon summarized his philosophy.

HALDEMAN: The worst thing about it is you get, you start—which we've managed to avoid, maybe too much—you start getting paranoid, and you start wondering about everything and everybody, and—

NIXON: I know.

HALDEMAN: —you figure you can't—

NIXON: But don't be too damn sure of anybody! I mean, that's—don't be too damn sure about anybody!

HALDEMAN: You can't.

NIXON: I am never sure of anybody.

HALDEMAN: Well [unintelligible]—

NIXON: You know, Bob, the reason you and I ain't so close now is, as you've noticed, I don't put that—[inaudible]. Do you not now see why I don't have staff meetings?

HALDEMAN: Damn right!

NIXON: Do you agree?

HALDEMAN: Oh, yeah!

NIXON: Don't you think I'm right?

HALDEMAN: I sure as hell do!

NIXON: I don't have staff meetings. Now I'd rather—I know it would charge up the staff for me to sit around and talk to 'em directly. But who knows—first, with—without evil intentions, some are going to leak.

HALDEMAN: That's right.

NIXON: Beyond that, there might be somebody in there that just—like a little guy like this [Radford] will get it all ... I tell you ... if there's ever anything important, just don't tell anybody. You know, I, uh—it's, it's really tough. It's got to be "Don't tell Rogers, Laird, anybody." We just don't tell the son—any son of a bitch at *all*.

HALDEMAN: And it is—it's a horrible way to have to work, but it's—

NIXON: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: —it's essential.

THE SUNDAY PHONE CALL

Drab December, sleet falling.
Dogs loosely coiled in torpor.
Horses nose-down in hay.
It's the hour years ago
I used to call my parents
or they'd call me.

The phone rings. Idly
empty of expectation
I answer. It's my father's
voice. *Pop!* I say, *you're dead!*
Don't you remember
that final heart attack,
Dallas, just before
Kennedy was shot?

Time means nothing here,
kiddo. He's jolly, expansive.
You can wait eons for an open line.
Time gets used up but
comes back. You know.
Like Ping-Pong.

Ping-Pong! The table in
the attic. My father, shirtsleeves
rolled, the wet stub of
a burnt-out cigarette
stuck to his lower lip as
he murdered each one
of my three older brothers
and me yearning under the eaves,
waiting for my turn.

You sound ... just like yourself,
I say. *I am myself, goddammit!*
Anyway, what's this
about an accident?

How did you hear about it?
I read it somewhere. Broke
your neck, et cetera.
He says this vaguely,
his shorthand way
of keeping feelings at bay.

Now I'm indignant.
But I almost died!

Didn't I tell you
never buy land on a hill?
It's worthless. What's
an educated dame like you
doing messing with horses?
Messing with horses is
for punks. Then, a little
softer, *I see you two've*
put a lot of work into
that hunk of real estate.

Thanks. Thanks for even
noticing. We love it here.
We'll never sell.

Like hell you won't!
You will!

Pop, I say, tearing up,
let's not fight for once.
My only Poppa, when
do I get to see you?

A long pause. Then,
coughing his cigarette cough,
Pupchen, he says,
I may be dead but
I'm not clairvoyant.
Behave yourself.
The line clicks off.

—MAXINE KUMIN

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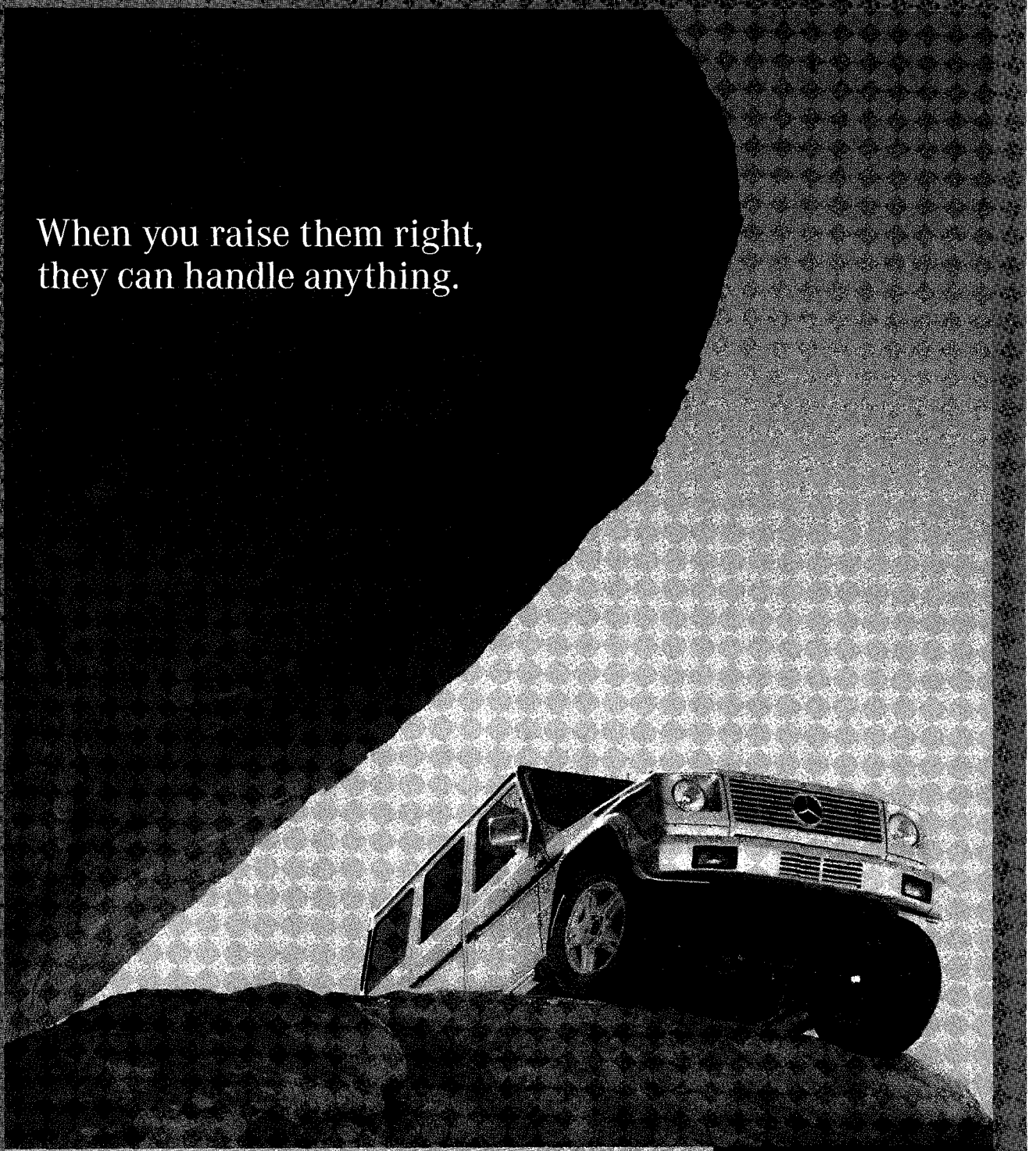

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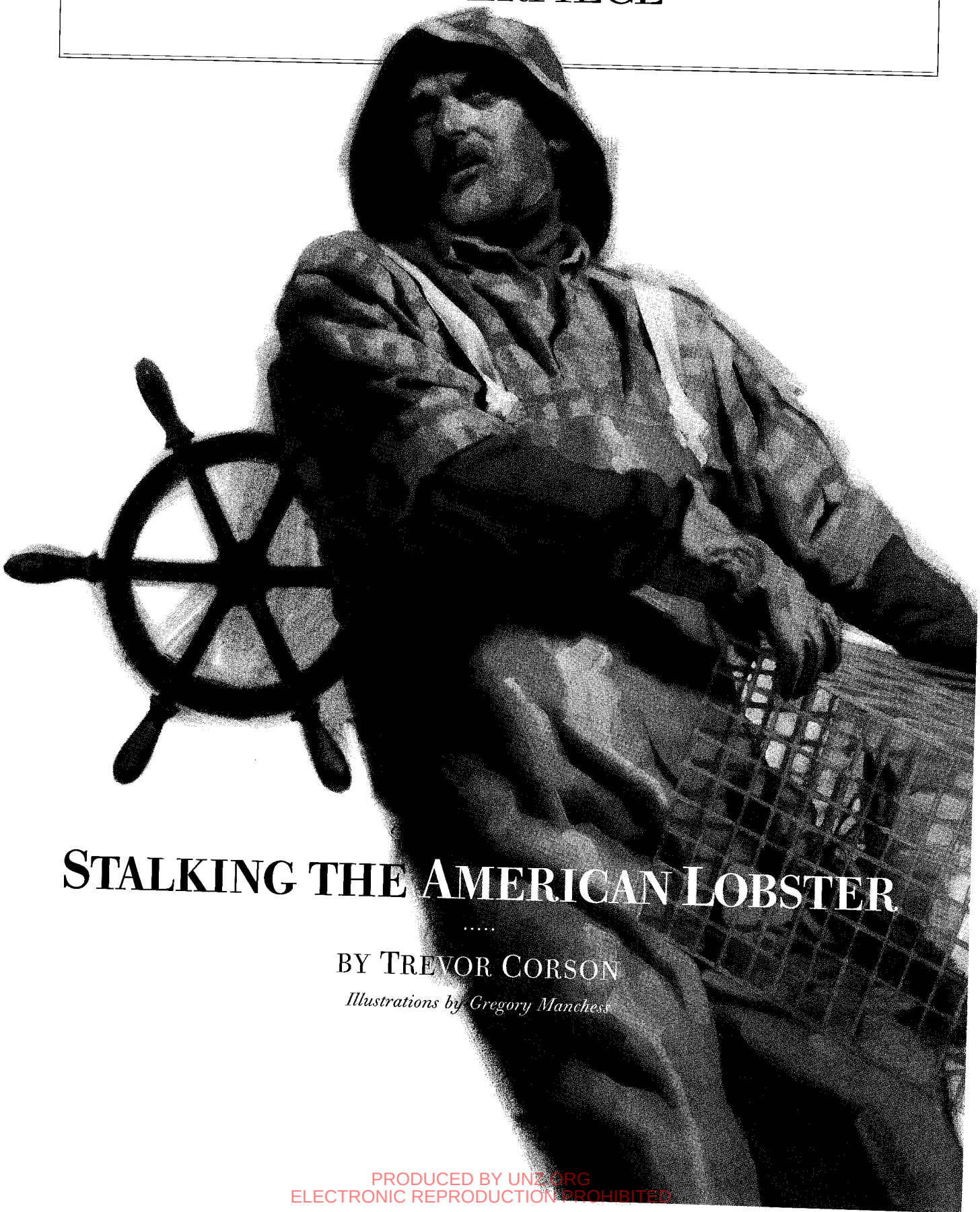

STALKING THE AMERICAN LOBSTER

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BY TREVOR CORSON

Illustrations by Gregory Manchess

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STALKING THE AMERICAN LOBSTER

Government scientists say that lobsters are being dangerously overfished. Lobstermen insist that stocks are plentiful. It's a familiar kind of standoff–except that now a new breed of ecologist has taken to the waters, using scuba gear, underwater robots, and even nuclear submarines, in order to figure out what's going on. It turns out that the lore and lessons of the lobsterman are worth paying attention to

"Sir, I have a target, distance two hundred meters," the sonar operator said. "It looks big." The nuclear-powered submarine *NR-1* was hovering 600 feet under water, on the edge of the continental shelf. Robert Steneck, a professor of marine sciences at the University of Maine, decided to check the target out. The helmsman nudged the sub forward, and Steneck, a short, energetic man with a thick red beard, slipped below the control room into the cramped observation module. There, through a six-inch-thick glass viewing portal, he was confronted with the biggest lobster he had ever seen. It was a female, about four feet long, weighing nearly forty pounds. She turned toward the sub as it came right up to her, nose to nose, and defiantly shook her claws.

Steneck is an unusual lobster scientist. Many of the leading scientists who track the North American lobster population do so mainly on computer screens in government laboratories, and from that vantage point lobsters appear to be in danger. From the mid-1940s to the mid-1980s Maine's lobstermen hauled in a remarkably consistent number of lobsters. But during the past fifteen years they have nearly tripled their catch, raising fears among many scientists about overfishing. The situation recalls the recent history of the cod fishery in New England, in which an exponential rise in the catch was followed by a devastating biological and economic collapse. In 1996, as lobster catches continued to hit all-time highs, a committee of the country's top government lobster scientists warned of disaster, and they have since recommended drastic management measures to save the fishery.

A failure in the lobster fishery—which has recently become the most valuable fishery in the northeastern United States—would be disastrous. Revenues from lobstering in 2000 topped $300 million. Nearly two thirds of the lobsters were caught in the waters off Maine, where some 4,000 fishermen earned $187 million at the dock for nearly 60 million pounds of lobster. And lobstering doesn't benefit only lobstermen: in Maine, for example, the fishery is a coastal economic engine that generates some $500 million a year altogether.

Most Maine lobstermen believe that their fishery is healthy, perhaps even too healthy. They worry not about a population collapse but about a market collapse. Even the lobstermen who admit that catches could decline don't see anything wrong with that. They say they're the lucky beneficiaries of a boom orchestrated by Mother Nature. If lobster catches soon return to more traditional levels, so be it.

The lobstermen argue that they are better biologists than the biologists are, and there's something to what they say. Fisheries scientists who gauge the effects of commercial lobster harvesting do so using techniques originally designed for tracking fish populations. Because fish are elusive and hard to study in the wild, estimates of how well their populations are faring rely heavily on mathematical

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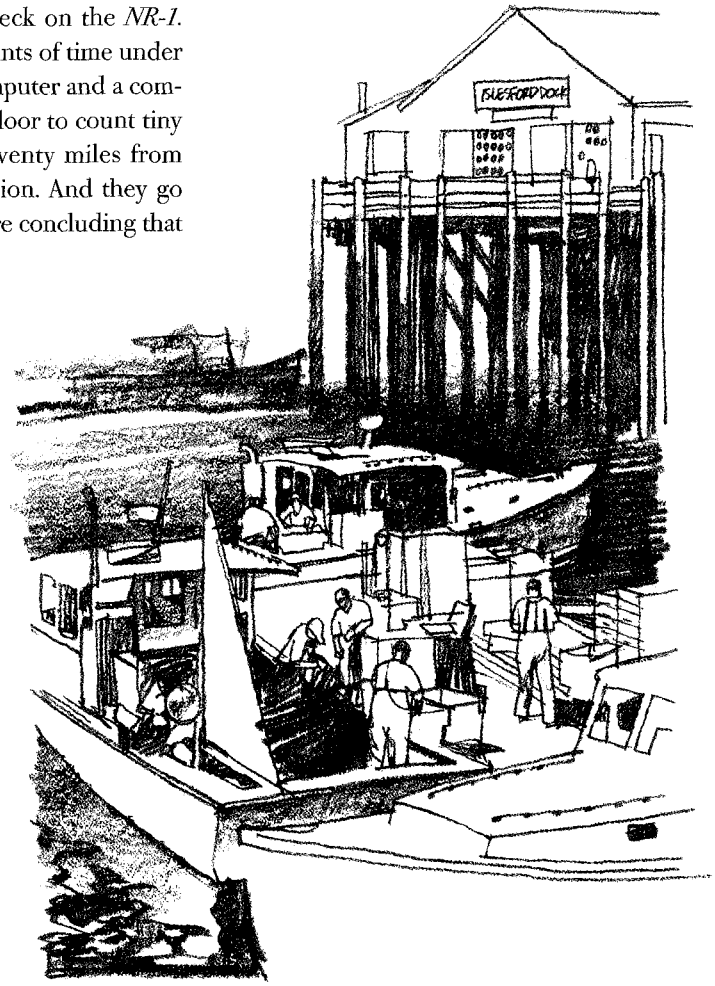
models. But lobsters aren't fish. Many of them dwell in shallow coastal water and are easy to observe, though until recently few scientists had bothered to observe them. And unlike fish, lobsters aren't harmed by being caught. Baby lobsters, oversized lobsters, and egg-bearing lobsters that lobstermen trap and return to the sea are none the worse for having taken the bait—in fact, they've gotten a free lunch. Lobstermen know their resource more intimately than do many other kinds of fishermen, and they feel justified in telling the government that lobsters are doing well enough to be left alone. The trouble is that lobstermen tend not to have advanced degrees and scientific data to back up their claims, so their opinion carries little weight. But lately a new breed of lobster scientist has appeared along the Maine coast, epitomized by Robert Steneck on the *NR-1*. These scientists are ecologists, and they spend inordinate amounts of time under water doing things almost no sane fisheries modeler with a computer and a comfortable office would ever do. They dig for days in the ocean floor to count tiny lobsters; they risk life and limb on shark-infested ledges seventy miles from shore to see how long lobster populations can survive predation. And they go lobstering with nuclear-powered submarines. Gradually they are concluding that some of the things lobstermen have been saying may be right.



Bruce Fernald has the ultimate lobsterman's physique: a low center of gravity and muscular shoulders. He has lived most of his life on an island called Islesford, off the coast of Maine. A pillar of the local community, he is often the one who gets a call when an elderly resident has a heart attack, and the one who rounds up the fishermen for a repair project on the public wharf. Fernald also takes a keen interest in lobster management and science. Along with several other Islesford lobstermen he has become one of Robert Steneck's most enthusiastic collaborators in the quest to collect data about lobsters. Steneck recognizes that lobstermen like Fernald and his colleagues spend far more time observing lobsters than he does, and that their knowledge can aid him in his research.

Fernald has always made his living by trapping lobsters across the 150 square miles of underwater boulder fields, gravel, and mud that surround the island. So have two of his brothers. He has never been down to see the terrain he fishes, but like a blind man who can read a face, he knows what it looks like—each gully, hillock, canyon, and plateau. His understanding of the lobster population around Islesford, developed during the course of a lifetime on the water, is similarly precise.

On a pitch-black morning last September the weather off Islesford was far from perfect: eddies and storm pulses were rolling in and battling with tidal currents inshore; the wind was picking up. Nevertheless, by 5:30 A.M. Fernald was on his boat, with his sternman. Cursing at a swarm of mosquitoes, Fernald checked the oil and cranked up the boat's 300-horsepower diesel engine. With the sky brightening, he pulled up to the thick mooring chain that tethered the boat to a two-ton slab of granite on the harbor floor, freed the vessel, and motored off. A hodgepodge of screens, instruments, and dials glared at him from the bulkhead and ceiling: engine readouts, bilge-pump alarms, a compass, a color Fathometer, a sixteen-mile-range radar, a GPS chart plotter. Also on the boat was a much less sophisticated bit of technology: a double-edged brass ruler known as the measure or the gauge. Since 1874 the measure has delineated the minimum size of a lobster that may legally be landed. In 1933 the State of

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Maine also instituted a maximum legal size. The main section of a lobster's armor, from the eye socket to the end of the back, is often referred to as the lobster's body but technically is called the carapace. In Maine the carapace must be no less than three and a quarter inches and no greater than five inches. Lobsters not meeting the measure are thrown overboard.

Out on the open water, Fernald gunned the boat to cruising speed while his sternman lifted the lid off the boat's bait bin, filling the cabin with the stench of herring. As the boat bounced against the chop, the sternman stuffed handfuls of gooey bait into small mesh bags with drawstrings. These he would soon be placing in the traps piled in the stern. Fernald had taken the traps up from shallow water a few days before and planned to drop them in deeper water this morning. He maintains 800 traps across a twenty-mile-long swath of ocean. He knows exactly where to place each one from one week to the next, March through December. He takes time off during the worst of the winter weather to repair his equipment.

During the summer Fernald keeps a third of his traps on short ropes near shore, strategically placed in certain coves and kelp beds, and near underwater boulders where he knows lobsters like to hide and hunt. In early September, though, lobsters begin to move offshore, so Fernald had already shifted much of his gear into middle-depth water—around a hundred feet. This morning's job was to set the first deepwater traps of the season. Seven miles out to sea Fernald pulled a dirty waterproof notebook from a tangle of electronic equipment and flipped through several pages of scrawled notes. He grabbed a pencil and jotted a few numbers directly onto the bulkhead next to his compass; then he squinted up at the GPS plotter above his head and keyed in a way point. He was headed for an underwater valley between Western and Eastern Muddy Reef. He was reassured to see his position confirmed by transmissions from four different satellites, but none of that was necessary: he could, if he had to, go back to navigating with nothing but landmarks and a magnetic compass, as his father still does.

Shortly, Fernald throttled down and studied the colorful blotches on his Fathometer screen, which was connected to a transducer on the bottom of the boat that bounced signals off the sea floor. The screen was painting the bottom as a thick black line at twenty-two fathoms, or 132 feet, which meant that Fernald was directly over the rocky ledge of Western Muddy Reef. He circled the boat a quarter turn and motored slowly east, watching the bottom on the Fathometer drop off and go from black to purple to orange, indicating a patch of cobble and then gravel where the ledge ended. Suddenly the line fell precipitously and settled into a mushy yellow haze at forty-seven fathoms, or 282 feet—a deep bottom of thick, dark mud. He was over the valley.

Like most lobstermen, Fernald believes that lobsters follow warmth. Fishermen think that many lobsters migrate in the spring toward land, to spend the summer in the sun-warmed waters near the shore, and migrate in the fall out to the mud in deeper water, far from the shallows that will soon be chilled by cold winds from Canada. The lobsterman must learn the lobsters' preferred routes along the bottom and intercept the animals on their pilgrimages. To succeed at his profession, Fernald therefore has to be an oceanographer, a sea-floor geologist, and a detective. Lobsters that migrate along the edge of an underwater canyon at one time of year may travel on the floor of the canyon at another time, so for Fernald to set his traps precisely can make all the difference.

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When the lobsters show up near shore every summer, the first thing most of them do is go into hiding for a few weeks, to shed their old shells and grow larger ones. This process is called molting, and it is fraught with danger: not only must the lobster expose its jelly-soft body to the hungry world, but it may get stuck. The lobster's body shrinks, the old shell splits open, and the animal's twenty pairs of gills stop beating. The lobster has about an hour to wriggle free before it suffocates. The hardest part is pulling the large claw muscles through the narrow tracts of shell between them and the body—if the lobster can't do so, it will sacrifice one or both claws to live. Free of the old shell, the lobster gets its gills working again. Then for the next five hours it fills its shriveled body full of water. Artificially enlarged by liquid, the lobster then secretes the beginnings of a new shell, which will harden over the coming weeks. The new outfit should last a year or so, depending on the size of the lobster. The old shell is an excellent source of minerals, so the lobster eats some of it to quicken the hardening of the new one. What the lobster doesn't eat it buries with mouthfuls of pebbles, probably to hide the evidence of its weakness and also prevent rival lobsters from raiding its nutrient stash. While the lobsters are molting, Fernald takes advantage of the lull to haul his boat out of the water briefly for repairs and a new paint job.

By August "the shedders are coming on," as the lobstermen say, and the great autumn harvest begins. Dressed in their new shells, the lobsters are ravenous, and now millions of them meet the minimum carapace length for capture. Lobsters of this size enter the traps in droves. By the time the shedders begin to reach deeper water, Fernald must already have traps in place, which is why he was now setting a gantlet of traps in the valley.

The task was complicated by the fact that the water had become a sloppy mess. A wave sloshed through an open panel in the boat's windshield and hit Fernald in the face and chest. He swore to himself, yanked the window shut, and shook himself off. Then he reached across the bulkhead and switched on the Clearview, a circular plate of glass in the boat's windshield that rotates eighty times a second—fast enough to fling off oncoming walls of water. "It would have been a lot easier to do this yesterday," he grumbled, "when it was flat-ass calm." He and his sternman pulled the first pair of traps from the pile in the stern and secured them on the rail so that they couldn't roll off before the buoy line was attached.

Fernald and his sternman arranged bulky coils of rope on the floor at their feet—carefully, because a tangle could cause mayhem. Fernald tied on a torpedo-shaped buoy, marked with his signature colors in Day-Glo paint; then he put the boat in gear and gave his sternman the signal to throw the first trap. It went over with a splash, and the workday was under way.

During the past fifteen years lobstermen have nearly tripled their catch, raising fears about overfishing. The situation recalls the recent history of the cod fishery, in which an exponential rise in the catch led to a biological and economic collapse.

Fernald and his fellow fishermen on Islesford want to share their knowledge of lobsters, but few scientists have been interested in listening to them. With the arrival on the scene of Robert Steneck and other ecologists, however, that has begun to change. Steneck and others have spent long days at sea on the lobster boats of Bruce Fernald and his brothers, and have used the waters off Islesford as one of their research stations.

On a gorgeous morning last July Steneck was out in those waters, conducting a census of large lobsters a few miles from shore, the results of which might indicate that the lobster population is not in as much danger as some scientists think. Steneck's first task as an ecologist is to measure the abundance of lobsters and map their patterns of distribution. Baby lobsters and juvenile lobsters are relatively easy to study, because they live in shallow water; all Steneck needs to conduct his research on them is a scuba tank. But large lobsters are another

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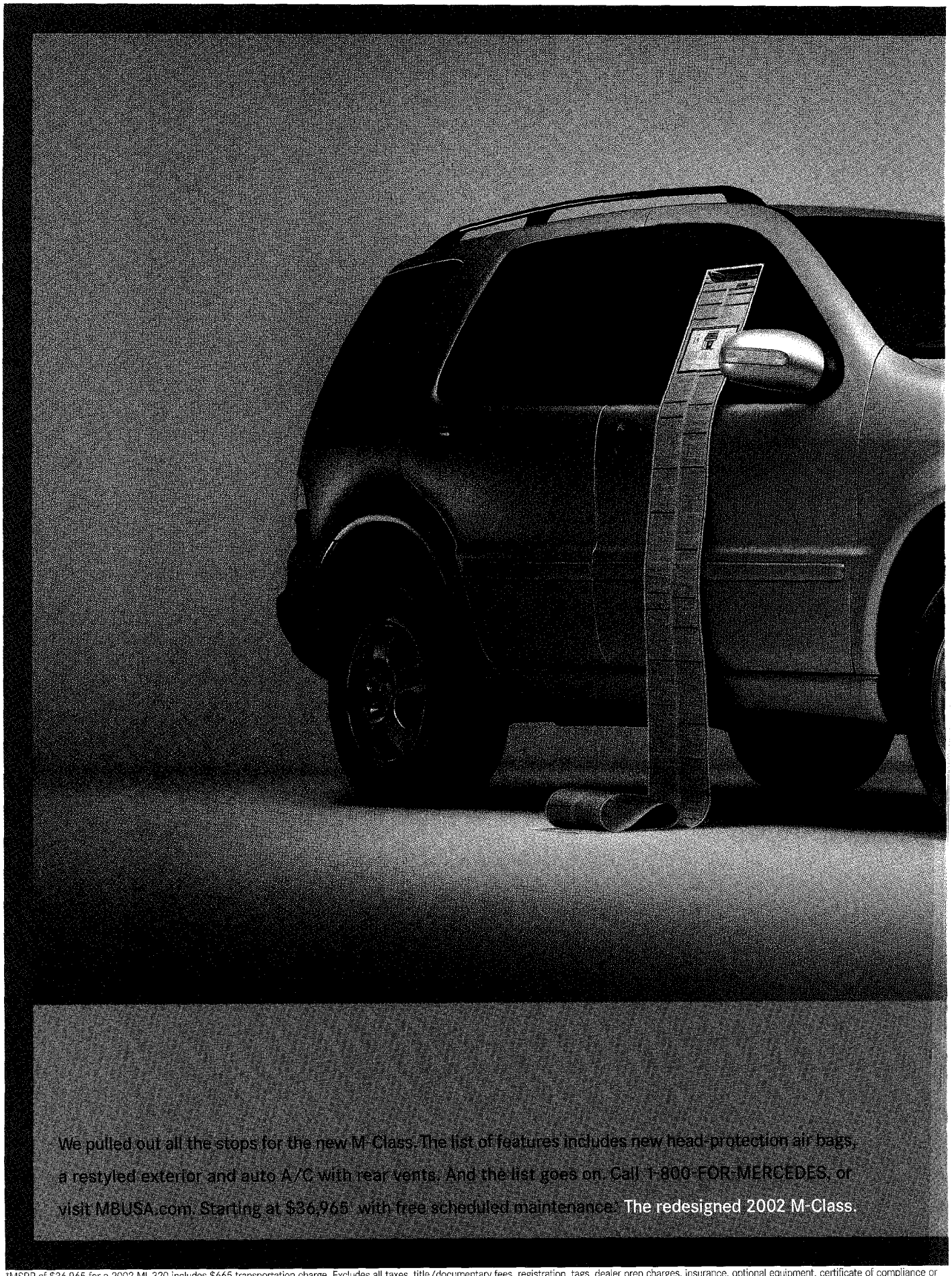

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matter—they've been known to live at depths exceeding 1,500 feet, though most of them probably don't venture much deeper than several hundred feet.

Steneck often explores the sea floor in a submarine, but on this trip he was using a submersible robot. The robot afforded him the luxury of staying above water, aboard the seventy-six-foot research vessel *Connecticut*, operated by the Marine Sciences and Technology Center of the University of Connecticut. The robot was a $160,000 piece of equipment known as a remotely operated vehicle, or ROV—an unmanned submarine that transmits video and other data from the ocean bottom to the mother ship through fiber-optic cables. The craft, operated with funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), was called *Phantom III S2*, or, to the team of technicians accompanying it, just *P3S2*.

Also out on the water that morning, tending his traps in a forty-foot lobster boat, was Jack Merrill, an Islesford lobsterman who, like Bruce Fernald, has been in the business for nearly thirty years. Merrill is gruff, bearded, and thoughtful, and has dedicated much of his life to making lobstermen themselves the lobster's best advocate. To that end he, too, regularly collaborates with Steneck and other researchers. When Merrill caught sight of the *Connecticut* in the distance, he changed course and headed toward it. Twenty minutes later he throttled down and drew up under the *Connecticut*'s looming bow.

Most Maine lobstermen believe that their fishery is healthy, perhaps even too healthy. They know their resource more intimately than many other kinds of fishermen, and they feel justified in telling the government that lobsters are doing well.

As Merrill pulled alongside, he was met by technicians carrying walkie-talkies and wearing orange flotation vests. Steneck emerged on deck, hailed Merrill, and pulled a notebook from his breast pocket. Merrill produced a notebook of his own and read off a few numbers to the scientist—numbers he would not have shared with his fellow lobstermen. This was one of his many small contributions to the quest for a better scientific understanding of lobsters. "That's where I've seen them," Merrill said. "Big ones, big time."

He then took the wheel of his boat and roared off across the sparkling water, back to his traps. Steneck climbed a steep stairway to the bridge, where he proceeded to map out the coordinates Merrill had given him on a nautical chart. He nodded. "Two rock outcrops," he said. "Little underwater mountains. Just where you'd expect to find big lobsters."

Later in the morning, when the *Connecticut* was in position and Steneck was on his third cup of coffee, the ROV was put into the water. In the command module on the *Connecticut* the *P3S2*'s pilot, along with a copilot, Steneck, and one of Steneck's research assistants, monitored a bank of luminescent screens and instruments. The room echoed with sonar pings. Off to one side, with a video monitor of his own, sat the State of Maine's chief lobster biologist, Carl Wilson, a former student of Steneck's.

The pilot steered the ROV toward the bottom with a pair of joy sticks. On the video monitors a rain of plankton gave way to a lunar landscape of pebble fields and small boulders. *P3S2* was hovering at a depth of 104 feet. Its spotlights and three video cameras illuminated tall sea anemones growing on the rocks like stalks of broccoli. Fish darted around mussels, scallops, and the occasional starfish.

"This looks like a high-rent district," Steneck said. Steneck's research assistant switched on the video recorder and noted time and depth on a clipboard. Moments later a lobster antenna became visible.

"There's one," Steneck said. "He's hiding between those two boulders."

The pilot pressed his joy stick for a slow-motion dive. *P3S2* nudged the boulder, and the lobster's antenna twitched. The pilot pulled the ROV back, and the lobster emerged, strutting forward, claws extended and antennae whipping the water. If he had been able to see the ROV, the lobster might have been unnerved—but despite the fact that they are endowed with some 20,000 eye

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facets, lobsters have terrible vision. They have sensitive touch receptors, however, and an acute sense of smell. Two long antennae and thousands of tiny hairs on their claws and legs give them ample information about their environment. Like houseflies, lobsters can even taste with their feet. A second pair of shorter antennae, known as antennules, contain 400 chemoreceptors and give lobsters most of their hunting and socializing skills. But *P3S2* didn't emit a recognizable scent.

"That's it, baby," Steneck said to the lobster. "Work the camera." Steneck wanted a side view, in order to get a laser measurement. When the lobster turned to walk away, Steneck said, "Paint him with the lasers." A pair of laser beams hit the lobster squarely on a claw and the tail, providing a gauge of its size. This routine was more or less what Steneck and his team would be doing every day, ten hours a day, for the coming week.

"Is that another set of claws right there?" the ROV pilot asked, aiming for another boulder. "I don't think so," Steneck said. "That looks like a molt. Empty shell." But Steneck's attention was attracted by something else: the pebbly ground at the base of the boulder was a lighter color than the surrounding bottom, and had been carved into a small crater. "Hold it," Steneck said. "We've got recent sediment-reworking here. Let's take a closer look." The investigation paid off. The actual lobster, perhaps still soft from having recently shed its shell, was hiding around the corner, its presence betrayed by the burrow it had dug for itself.

The lobster wouldn't budge from its protected spot, but Carl Wilson saw a retreating shape in a corner of the screen. "Is that one?" he asked. The pilot changed course, and *P3S2* slowly gained on the lumbering lobster. This one clearly hadn't shed recently—large barnacles grew on its shell, an indication of its size, because bigger lobsters molt less often. Alerted to a presence behind it, the lobster spun, faced *P3S2* head on, lifted its claws wide, and ran directly at the ROV. "You're going to lose," the pilot said. At the last second the lobster seemed to reach the same conclusion, and it backed off.

The first lobsterlike decapods probably evolved around 400 million years ago. Today there are thirty or so kinds of clawed lobsters, and forty-five species of clawless ones. By far the most abundant clawed lobster is *Homarus americanus*, or the American lobster. To the European explorers who arrived on the Maine coast in the 1600s, this greenish-brown crustacean looked familiar, because European waters are home to the American lobster's closest cousin: the bluish-black *Homarus gammarus*. But nowhere else in the world is *Homarus* as plentiful as it is in the waters off Maine. The explorers caught lobsters easily with long hooks or by dragging nets; later fishermen used a net hanging from an iron hoop and shaped like a cauldron—thus "pot," a term still used today to refer to a trap.

The basic design of the modern lobster trap was developed in the 1830s, and except for a switch from wood to wire, it hasn't changed much since. The number of traps in the water has changed dramatically, however. Records at the Maine Department of Marine Resources indicate that 50,000 to 100,000 traps were in use in 1880. Today some 2.8 million traps blanket the Maine coast.

A lobster trap is a wire-mesh rectangle almost four feet long, divided into sections: a "kitchen" and one or two "parlors." The bait bag hangs in the middle of the kitchen. On either side of the kitchen the wire is replaced by a ramp, made of knit twine, that ends in a small hole. Lobsters have an easy time walking up the ramp and through the hole into the kitchen; finding the hole

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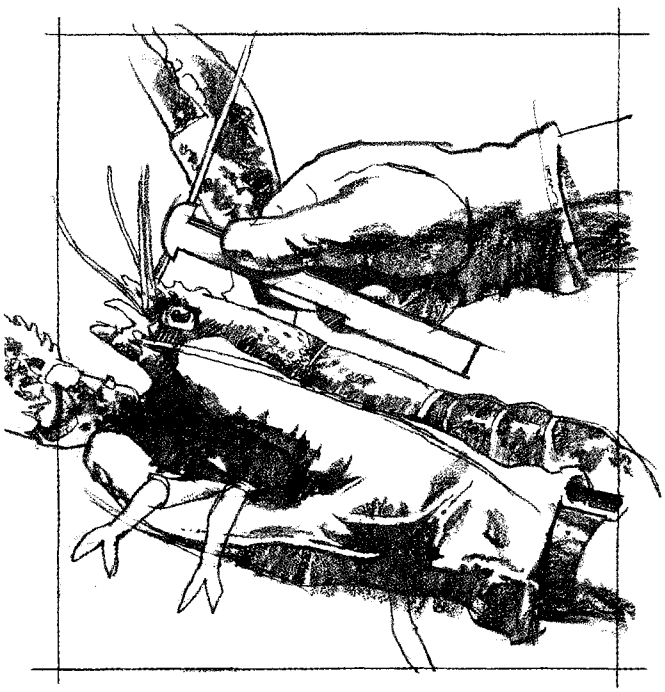
and getting back out is more difficult. Many of those who can't find their way out are suckered into trying to escape on a third twine ramp—which leads to the parlor, designed to keep them stuck until the trap is hauled in by a lobsterman. Little lobsters have a Get Out of Jail Free card: the parlor is fitted with vents through which they can usually escape. Weather permitting, Bruce Fernald hauls his traps about every four days, and generally leaves them in the same area for several weeks. When lobsters begin to migrate elsewhere, he shifts the traps to follow them.

Today's lobster trap is a remarkably inefficient tool for catching lobsters. Winsor H. Watson III, a zoologist at the University of New Hampshire, and his graduate students have developed a device Watson calls a "lobster trap video," or LTV, which consists of a trap outfitted with a camera that looks down through a Plexiglas roof; a waterproof VCR unit; and a red lighting array for night vision. Watson can set the LTV on the bottom and run it for twenty-four hours to see how many lobsters enter the trap and what they do once they're inside.



Soon after a trap is set, lobsters smell the bait and approach. If the kitchen is unoccupied, more than half of those that approach will eventually enter and nibble at the bag of fish for about ten minutes. An astounding 94 percent of those walk right back out again. Furthermore, while one lobster is eating, other lobsters are often battling among themselves to be the next to enter, thus reducing the potential catch drastically—especially if the one eating also fights off any intruders on his meal. In one twelve-hour period recorded by Watson lobsters in the vicinity made 3,058 approaches to the LTV. Forty-five lobsters actually entered, and of those, twenty-three ambled out one of the kitchen entrances after eating. Twenty prolonged their stay by entering the parlor, but seventeen of those eventually escaped, leaving just five in the trap. Of those five, three were under the legal size. When Watson hauled the trap up, he'd caught a grand total of two salable lobsters.

Lobstermen like it that way. In Maine they have lobbied to outlaw other methods of catching lobsters, and during the past several years they themselves have imposed limits on the number of traps each lobsterman may set. Trapping provides a steady year-round job with time off in the winter, and it allows lobstermen to harvest only certain lobsters and throw back the undersized, oversized, and egg-bearing animals that are so crucial to the long-term health of the fishery. Most species that have collapsed from overfishing fell victim to radical improvements in fishing technology. "It's a very primitive trap we use," one lobsterman says, "and that's an important part of Maine law. As long as we keep using traps, we'll never catch them all. We're traditional in a lot of ways. I think that's going to save us in the long run."

The faster fishermen at Islesford can haul more than 450 traps in a single day. It's a demanding, manic routine, and it's dangerous. Most of the lobstermen on Islesford have tales of getting tangled in an outgoing rope as they race from one trap to the next; this can drag a man to his death in seconds. Two years ago a loop of outgoing line caught Jack Merrill around the ankle. He threw himself down as he was dragged aft and managed to lodge himself under the stern deck. His sternman rushed to the controls and threw the boat out of gear, saving Merrill's leg.

Fisheries scientists think that the hell-bent routine of lobstering is part of the reason lobsters are overfished; the race for profits, they feel, means that too many lobsters are getting trapped too soon. According to the scientists (though lobstermen dispute this), almost all of the annual catch now consists of

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new shedders—lobsters that have just molted up to the minimum legal size—instead of a more diverse sampling of sizes, and that doesn't bode well for the ability of the population to sustain itself.

Josef Idoine is employed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), a division of the NOAA, as the chief federal biologist responsible for lobster. Idoine, who works at the NMFS laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, was not originally a lobster scientist. In college he majored in English literature, but the biological sciences and math had always captivated him. He later decided to pursue a degree in fisheries science. The professor with whom he studied modeled not only fish populations but insect ones as well, and Idoine realized that he could apply the same modeling techniques to lobsters. "Lobsters and insects both grow by molting," he says. "They're really not that different."

One problem Idoine faced—a problem that he continues to wrestle with today—is that scientists have yet to discover a reliable method for determining the age of a lobster. This means that although most fisheries scientists can rely on age data when they model fish populations, lobster modelers have to develop estimates of growth rates. Early in life lobsters molt frequently—up to twenty-five times in their first five years. After that they molt about once a year for a while, and when they're bigger, the rate drops again. Complicating the picture is the fact that female growth slows during reproduction, when energy goes into producing offspring instead.

In the 1980s Idoine and Michael Fogarty, a colleague at the NMFS, published papers that modeled a hypothetical lobster population. Modeling lobsters was in itself nothing new. Fogarty had already developed models describing the population dynamics of lobsters, and lobster scientists elsewhere had built careers around similar projects. But the Fogarty-Idoine model seemed to give scientists a better idea of how lobstermen might be affecting the lobster population's ability to sustain itself. The model suggested a commonsense idea: if lobstermen caught too many lobsters of too small a size, not enough lobsters would get the chance to grow larger, mate, and replace the lobsters being caught.

The Fogarty-Idoine model became an important part of a combined federal and state lobster-management system. Government scientists used the model to analyze the lobster population in the Gulf of Maine. The analyses led scientists to conclude that lobstermen were indeed risking the long-term sustainability of the resource by fishing too much. In the 1990s Idoine collaborated with another NMFS colleague, Paul Rago, to refine the model further; in its current version it is referred to as the Idoine-Rago model.

Lobstermen are suspicious of mathematical simulations like the Idoine-Rago model. Jack Merrill, of Islesford, has long been one of the model's toughest critics. Like Idoine, Merrill studied both literature and science in college. When he started lobstering, in the early 1970s, he joined the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA) and soon became its vice-president.

In the 1980s Merrill began collecting scientific papers on the lobster fishery. He noticed something strange: fisheries scientists had been using population models to predict the crash of lobster stocks for years, and so far not only had they been wrong but they'd had it completely backward—lobsters had done nothing but increase in numbers. When Fogarty and Idoine's papers came out, Merrill and other MLA officers met with Idoine and his colleagues at Woods Hole. "We asked, 'Why are you telling us we're overfishing?'" Merrill remembers. "They said, 'The formula tells us that you're overfishing.'"

The disagreement between Merrill and Idoine—and between almost all lobstermen and government scientists—boils down to a question of small lobsters versus big lobsters. Everyone agrees that in Maine's frigid waters only

Today's lobster trap is a remarkably inefficient tool. An astounding 94 percent of lobsters that enter traps walk right back out again. Lobstermen like it that way. "As long as we keep using traps," one lobsterman says, "we'll never catch them all."

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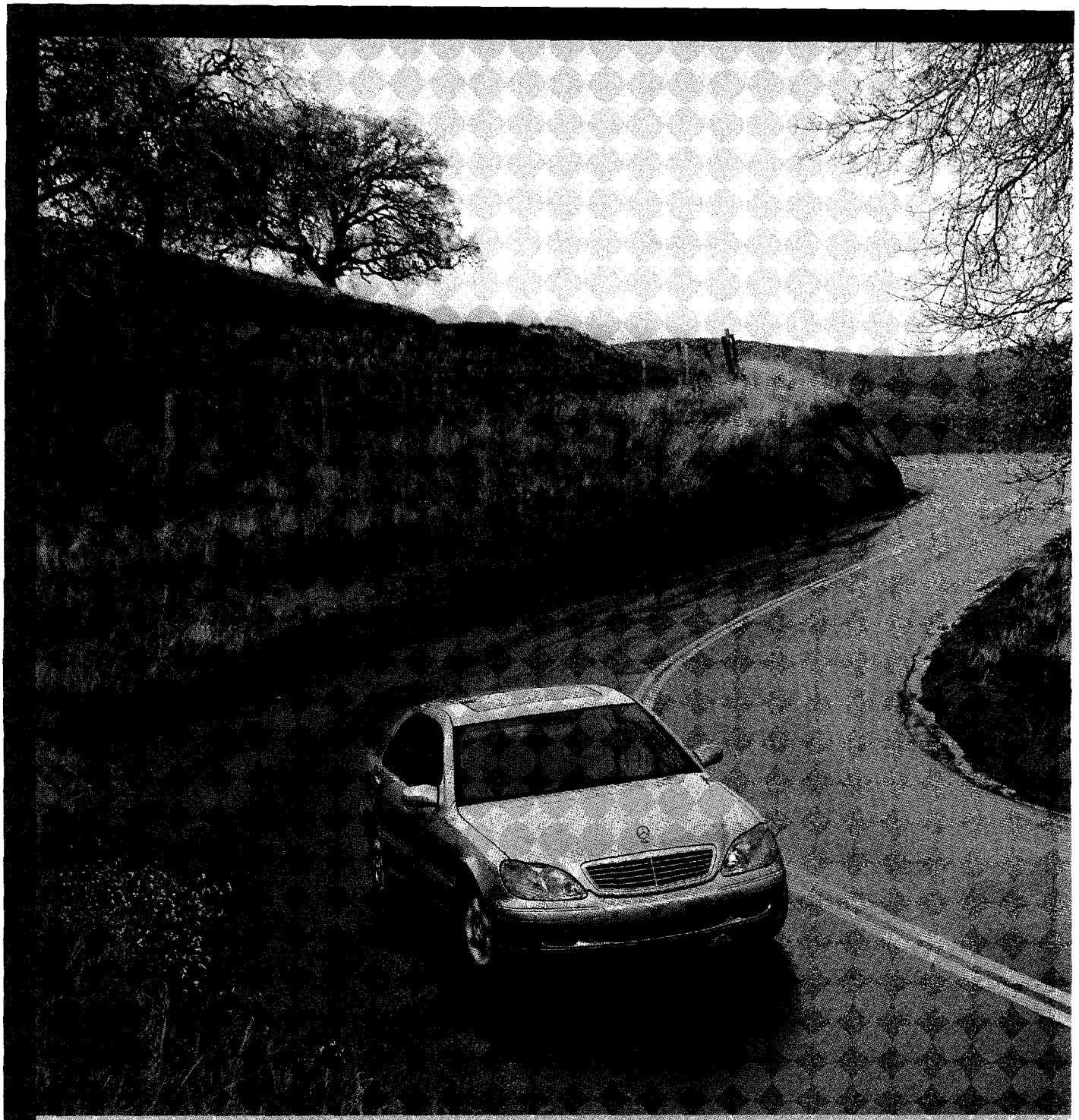

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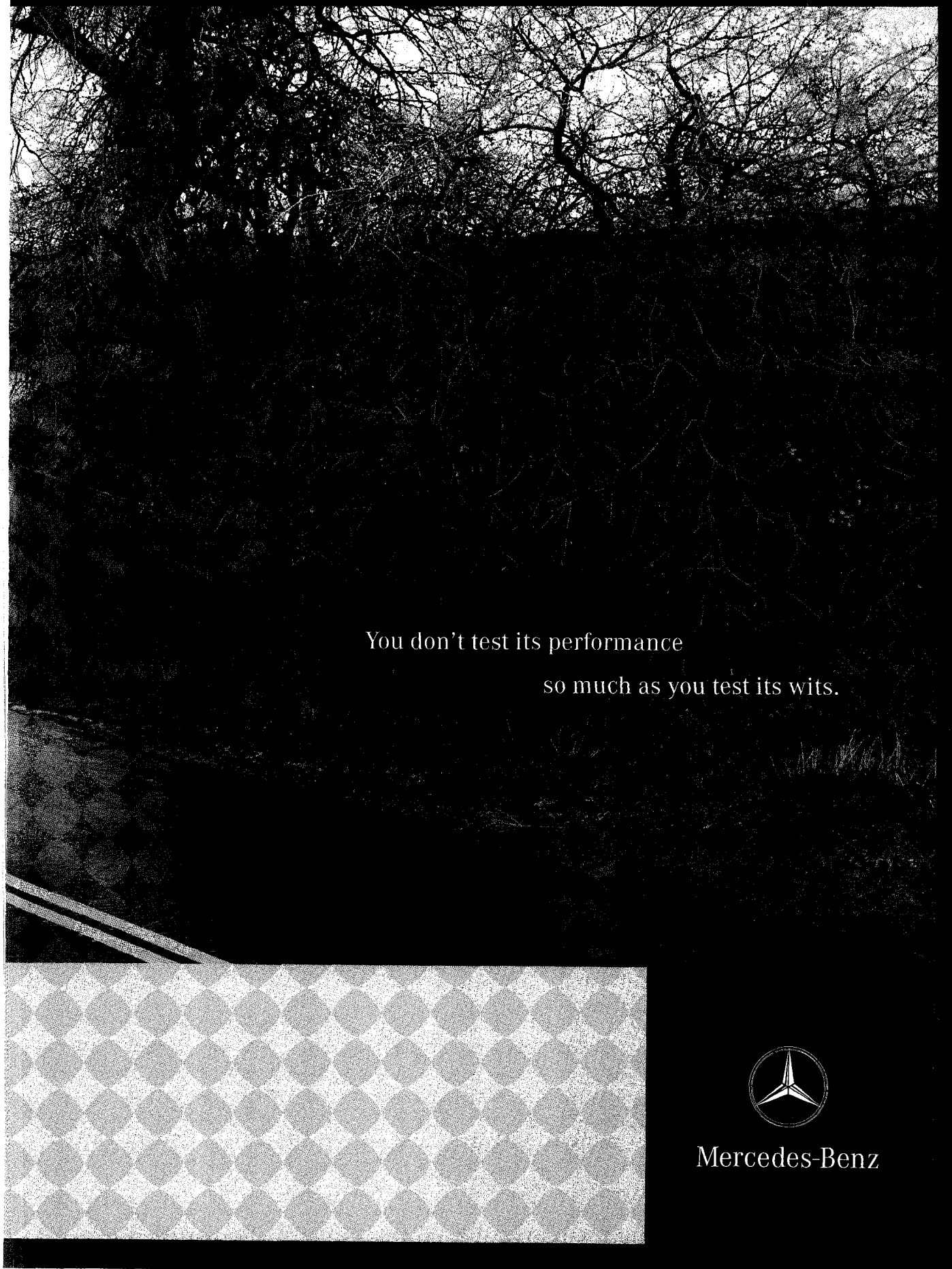

SYSTEM, SO REMEMBER AIR BAG SAFETY: BUCKLE EVERYONE AND CHILDREN IN BACK!

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about 15 percent of lobsters are sexually mature at the minimum legal size. Lobstermen are harvesting prepubescents, which suggests to Idoine that very few female lobsters ever get the chance to mate. "That's what keeps me awake at night," Idoine says with a laugh. "Thinking about female lobsters." But the problem shouldn't be worth losing any sleep over, because a solution seems apparent. Government scientists have long recommended additional controls on lobster fishing, such as closed seasons and limits on the total number of traps in the water, but central to most management proposals has been raising the minimum legal size. That way more females would have a chance to mature and reproduce before they're caught. "Along with controls on fishing effort, raising the minimum size gives you a margin of safety," Idoine explains.

But Merrill and his colleagues in the MLA don't think Idoine's recommendations are necessary. They believe that the scientific models fail to factor in the margin of safety that lobstermen have built into their fishery for decades: a pool of large reproductive lobsters, protected not only by Maine's maximum-size restriction but also by a curious practice known as V-notching.

Post-larval lobsters are affectionately called "superlobsters." Like miniature Supermen, they fly through the water with their claws outstretched, in search of a nursery ground. This is the only period in a lobster's life when it can swim forward.

A cornerstone of Maine's conservation ethic, V-notching dates to 1917 and has been largely self-enforced by Maine lobstermen since the 1950s. V-notching is all about making babies. The sex life of lobsters does not get wide public attention, but it has attracted the interest of a small number of researchers. One of these is a biologist named Diane Cowan, a onetime professor at Bates College who is now the president of The Lobster Conservancy, a nonprofit research center dedicated to involving Maine coastal communities in lobster science.

Cowan once spent several months observing the behavior of a male lobster she had named M, which lived with one other male and five females in a tank at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, where Cowan later worked as a graduate student. Every night M would emerge from his shelter, boot all the other lobsters out of their shelters, and then return home. The females got the message: M was dominant. The females visited both of the males at their shelters, but M got far more lady callers than the other male. The visits were decorous at first: an interested female would insert her claws into the entrance of M's shelter and wiggle her chemoreceptor antennules to smell him. Then she'd urinate at him from the front of her head, releasing pheromones. In appreciation M would spread her urine throughout his apartment, by standing on tiptoe and fanning the water with his swimmerets—little fins along the bottom of the lobster's tail, arranged in five pairs.

Having ascertained mutual interest, the two abandoned all caution. M's primary concern seemed to be how soon the female would undress for him, and he would show his impatience by boxing the surfaces of her claws with the tips of his. Females can mate only after they shed their shells; Cowan thinks that M's boxing was a way of testing how hollow his lover's shell was in preparation for molting.

"One day I walked into the lab, and I thought there were three lobsters in M's shelter," Cowan says. It turned out to be not a ménage à trois but, rather, evidence of a conventional coupling. It was M, a female, and her molted shell. When a female that wants to mate is ready to molt, she lets the male know by placing her claws on top of his head, in a behavior scientists have termed "knighting." This apparently indicates to the male that he must protect her while she sheds her shell; scientists think the female may also release a sex pheromone that discourages the male from simply eating her, as he might under other circumstances. Once the female is undressed, the male gingerly lifts her soft body, flips her on her back, inserts a pair of rigid swimmerets into a pair of

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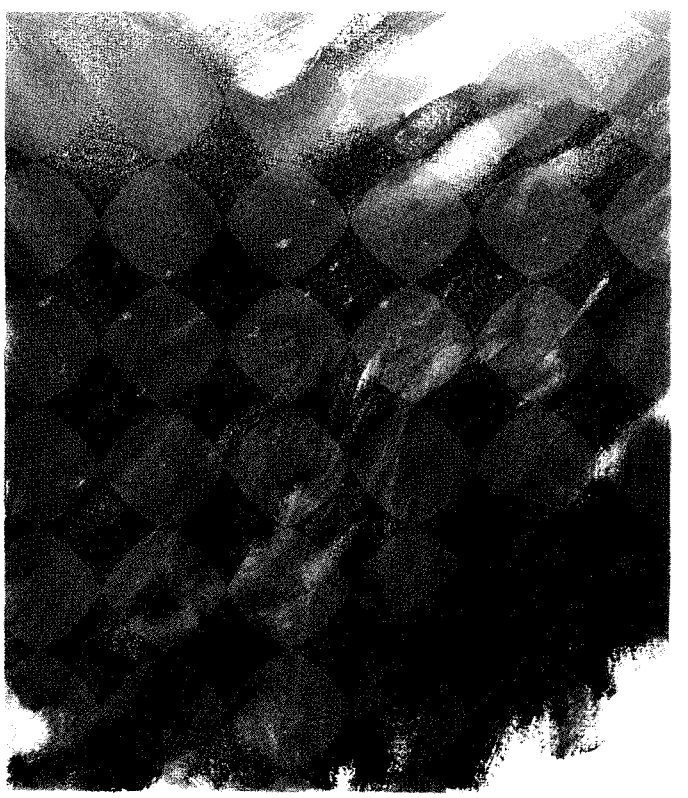
receptacles at the base of her abdomen, and passes his sperm into her. It's like the missionary position, but with double the genitalia.

Once the female's new shell had hardened, after a week or so, she moved out and a new female moved in. It turned out that all the females in the tank wanted to mate with M, and Cowan discovered that they were able to time their molts consecutively so that each would get a chance. Cowan describes the phenomenon as serial monogamy, and she has published papers on it; but she has also learned that females don't always follow its rules. "One night another female got in the shelter and took a chunk out of the [resident] female," Cowan says. "Lobsters get PMS—pre-molt syndrome. Before they molt, they have an activity peak and can go a little berserk." When Cowan altered the sex ratio in the tank, things got more confused. "When I had three males and just two females, the females couldn't make up their minds which male to stay with," she says. "They kept switching from male to male instead of pair bonding with just one guy. It was absolute chaos. It was horrible." Cowan altered the ratio further, and the results were even worse: "I tried to have five males and two females in the tank, but the males fought so aggressively that I had to take two of them out. Pretty soon even the remaining males had no legs left. They were walking around on their mouth parts because they were killing each other."



Lobstermen realize that producing offspring is a big commitment for a female lobster—up to twenty months of pregnancy and tens of thousands of eggs. At first the eggs develop inside her body, and she may wait for as long as a year after copulation to extrude them. Then she finds a secluded spot, rolls over onto her back, squirts the eggs onto the underside of her tail, and carries them around for another nine to eleven months. When they finally hatch and become larvae, she releases them into the ocean currents.

Once a female is carrying eggs, she becomes a kind of goddess to lobstermen. Most Maine lobstermen who find an "egger" in a trap will cut a quarter-inch V-shaped notch in her tail flipper (if she isn't notched already) before setting her free, and from then on it's illegal to sell her, whether she's carrying eggs or not. When she molts, the notch will become less distinct, but conscientious fishermen like Bruce Fernald and Jack Merrill always cut a new notch. "She's a proven breeder," Fernald says, "so we protect her." V-notched females and the oversized males that are protected by Maine's maximum-size law form a pool of reproductive lobsters called brood-stock. Lobstermen are convinced that brood-stock lobsters more than compensate for any deficiencies in egg production by smaller lobsters.

They're not necessarily wrong. A female lobster that has mated can extrude about 10,000 eggs if she has recently reached sexual maturity but ten times that if she is bigger. An older female lobster is also savvier: she can retain a male's sperm inside her body, perfectly preserved, for up to several years after copulation. She can use that sperm at will to produce a second batch of eggs. One Canadian researcher estimates that to achieve the egg production of a single five-pound female—a common size for a veteran V-notched lobster—more than ten smaller females would have to be protected. The lobstermen have a different way of saying the same thing: if V-notching were replaced by an increase in the minimum size, the increase would have to be so great that the only lobsters fishermen could legally catch would be too big to eat.

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When Robert Steneck started scuba diving off the coast of Maine, in 1974, he was studying echinoderms and gastropod mollusks, but he kept getting distracted by lobsters. He'd been a researcher for the Smithsonian in the Caribbean, and he remains an internationally recognized expert on coralline algae, but in Maine he found a new calling. "There were all these lobsters and this huge industry that mattered to people," Steneck recalls. "I looked in the literature and realized that we knew almost nothing about lobsters in their natural habitats. I said to myself, 'Why the hell am I studying limpets?'" And there was a bonus in the study of lobsters: "At the end of the day you can have them for dinner."

At first Steneck's experiments were just for fun: he built underwater houses for the lobsters and found that the animals were partial to a section of plastic pipe with a rubber flap over one end. Soon Steneck was spending all his free time sawing up PVC pipe of different diameters, and the houses formed subdivisions. Given choices, the lobsters would shop around. It was almost as if they were picking out blue jeans: Steneck developed a record-keeping system that described smaller lobsters choosing "restricted fit" shelters and bigger ones going for "relaxed fit."

Steneck quickly became disenchanted with the suburban bliss he had created for his lobsters. He concluded that neighborly interaction was lacking and decided to change the zoning. But when he moved the shelters closer together, smaller lobsters moved out. "I set up video cameras," Steneck says, "and it turned out the dominant lobsters were fighting with their neighbors and evicting them." This wasn't as surprising as what Steneck discovered next. When he brought the shelters even closer together, the larger lobsters moved out, and smaller ones moved back in.

A complex set of hard-wired behaviors was governing the interactions that Steneck observed. Lobsters can be aggressive and cannibalistic, but most of the time they will dance delicately around one another to avoid unnecessary violence. If two lobsters of similar size are competing for a shelter, though, they may duel to establish dominance. Each opens its claws wide and spreads them threateningly. Circling like prizefighters, they urinate at each other and lash out with their antennae. If this behavior fails to scare away one of the lobsters, the next contest is a shoving match. Like bucks locking antlers, the lobsters put their outspread claws together and push in a test of strength.

When dominance has been established between two lobsters, if they meet again within seven days they won't bother dueling a second time. The dominant lobster will broadcast its status by secreting chemicals in its urine. Its swimmerets will pulse constantly to spread the urine into the surrounding water, and the losing lobster will recognize the scent and back off. Steneck's experiments revealed that even for a dominant lobster, though, avoiding fights in the first place was sometimes the best alternative. "If you're surrounded by a huge number of other lobsters, you have a choice," he says. "You can spend all day fighting, or you can move from an area of high population density to an area of low population density." Ironically, Steneck himself would soon be facing a similar choice.

Steneck was surrounded by fisheries scientists who thought about lobsters very differently from the way he did. He didn't agree with government modelers that lobsters were overfished. He also didn't think that encouraging more egg production would necessarily result in more lobsters. The complexities of the ecosystem in which lobsters live suggested to Steneck that any number of factors

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were affecting lobster abundance. The historical evidence from catches, and the large numbers of young lobsters Steneck saw under water, suggested that the resource was healthy.

On Islesford, Jack Merrill also felt that the government's lobster experts were wrong. When he and his colleagues in the Maine Lobstermen's Association got wind of Steneck's research, they were intrigued. Ed Blackmore, the president of the MLA at the time, invited Steneck to a meeting of MLA officers. Steneck remembers it well. "I'd had very little contact with the industry at that point," he says, "and I didn't know anything—I showed up in a suit." To the room full of tough-skinned fishermen in boots and jeans, Steneck may have looked like just another scientist, but when he started talking, they sat up in their chairs. "We didn't agree with everything he said," Merrill recalls, "but it was the first time we'd heard a scientist say anything that made any sense."

By the summer of 1989 Steneck's claim that lobsters weren't being overfished had provoked the ire of government scientists. Steneck was summoned before a committee of two dozen lobster experts and interrogated. "At academic conferences my work had always been well received," he says. "Everything I said to that committee was later published in international journals. But with the committee it was dead on arrival."

The committee declared Steneck's findings irrelevant, but it was too late. Lobstermen in both the United States and Canada had gotten wind of Steneck's research, and many of them embraced his ideas. As a result, support for a four-stage increase in the minimum size, which lobstermen had agreed to a few years before, evaporated. Negotiations involving President George Bush and Canada's Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, failed to save the deal. The first two increments of the increase had already been enacted, but state legislatures blocked the remainder. Leading government scientists blamed Steneck.

Steneck began to collaborate with two ecologists—Lewis Incze and Richard Wahle, both currently with the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences, in Boothbay Harbor, Maine—to design an alternative to the government's modeling system. To gauge the health of the lobster population, the team developed a system for measuring the abundance of lobster larvae in the water, baby lobsters on shallow bottom, and brood-stock lobsters in deep water.

In the mid-1980s Wahle had realized that there was a huge blind spot in the understanding of the lobster's life cycle. "Lobster larvae just disappeared into a black box," he recalls, "and came out four or five years later, when lobsters showed up in fishermen's traps." He started asking around. From a fellow diver and lobster researcher he heard about an area where an unusual number of small lobsters had been seen. The information was old, but Wahle went out with his scuba gear and had a look anyway. "It was unbelievable," he remembers. "You'd turn over rocks and boulders, and every little rock had a tiny lobster under it. It was clear that we'd hit on something. This was a nursery ground."

Wahle developed a kind of giant underwater vacuum cleaner for collecting baby lobsters, counting them, and returning them to the bottom unharmed. After sampling several locations in this way, he concluded that shallow coves with lots of cobbles were the ideal habitat for baby lobsters. But not all such coves actually were nurseries. To determine why, Wahle teamed up with Incze, whose specialty was catching larvae by towing fine nets behind a research boat—a job that one of his colleagues has likened in difficulty to collecting insects with a butterfly net towed behind a helicopter. With Incze trawling for larvae on the surface and Wahle diving below, the two men discovered what distinguished the best nursery grounds: they had the best conditions for the delivery of larvae. "The hot spots are where you get a convergence of good habitat, ocean current,

In Maine the marine ecologist Robert Steneck found a new calling. "I realized that we knew almost nothing about lobsters in their natural habitat. I said to myself, 'Why the hell am I studying limpets?'" And there was a bonus in studying lobsters: "You can have them for dinner."

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and prevailing winds," Wahle explains. The currents and winds were delivering larvae to the nursery grounds from wherever they had hatched.

Surprisingly, lobster larvae themselves have a small say in where they end up. Most fish larvae are helpless creatures, utterly at the mercy of water flow, and so are lobster larvae, up to a point. After hatching they progress through three planktonic stages, a process that probably takes several weeks, during which they are carried by whatever prevailing current catches them. Then they molt to a fourth stage, which biologists call post-larval—or, more affectionately, the "super-lobster" stage, because like miniature Supermen, these little lobsters fly through the water with their claws outstretched. "They can swim around powerfully in a horizontal direction, but it's more the vertical dives they're able to control," Wahle explains. This is the only period in a lobster's life when it can swim forward, propelling itself with the swimmerets under its tail, and it lasts no more than a week or so. "They have a biological clock ticking," Wahle says, so the search for protective cobbles is frantic. If a superlobster dives and can't find a nice spot to settle down, it launches itself back into the current and tries again.

Even if lobstermen were to protect many more lobsters and allow them to produce eggs, larval biology and ocean currents would still have the final say in whether those eggs became new lobsters. And, as any fisherman knows, the sea is fickle.

Once Wahle had mastered techniques for counting baby lobsters in their nurseries, he and Steneck realized they might be on the verge of a new era in lobster management. They developed a rigorous sampling protocol, trained a team of student divers from the University of Maine, and, in 1989, initiated a series of annual measurements that they thought might work as a predictive system: a future increase or decrease in lobster catches ought to show up in advance as a fluctuation in the number of larvae and young lobsters the ecologists observed.

Meanwhile, the ecologists began to monitor lobster brood-stock as well. Lobstermen like Bruce Fernald and Jack Merrill had a great deal of data to offer the scientists—fishermen hauled up egged lobsters in their traps every day. Steneck put Carl Wilson, his graduate student at the time, in charge of an ambitious effort to get university interns out on lobster boats counting lobsters, especially V-notched lobsters—a technique called sea sampling. At first the sampling trips took place during the summer months and weren't especially productive. "Jack kept harping on Bob," Wilson recalls, "saying that the fall was when the egged lobsters really migrated offshore—that's when we should do it." In the autumn of 1997 Wilson decided to go to Islesford, spend a day on Merrill's boat, and see for himself. "Jack was right," he says. "It was just mind-boggling. Huge eggers, huge V-notchers, all these egg-bearing females that you never see during the rest of the year, came up in the traps."

While his students worked aboard lobster boats, Steneck descended to the sea floor in a submarine to quantify brood-stock lobsters, including those too large to come up in traps. Steneck continues these dives today, using ROVs, and Wilson, as the State of Maine's chief lobster biologist, now heads an expanded sea-sampling program. So far the data appear to support the lobstermen's contention that the population of large reproductive lobsters is actually bigger than mathematical models suggest.

But the data the ecologists have collected on lobster larvae and baby lobsters complicate the picture. Through 1994 they observed an abundance of both larvae and babies on the bottom. As those baby lobsters grew to marketable size, lobster catches went even higher, hitting records in 1999 and 2000. In 1995, however, Incze had seen a sudden drop in larvae, and Wahle had seen a widespread decline in the baby lobsters he was counting on the bottom. The two teamed up with Michael Fogarty, the population modeler at the National Marine Fisheries Service, to develop a different kind of model—one that would use the ecologists' new data to predict future catches. After five years of low counts of larvae and babies, in the fall of 2000 Incze, Wahle, and Fogarty announced their

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findings at a scientific conference. Steneck announced that his scuba surveys of juvenile lobsters also reflected a downward trend in some areas.

The ecologists' system had yet to be proved predictive, but Steneck, Wahle, and Incze decided to issue a press release announcing that they had witnessed a decline in larval and baby lobsters. They admitted that the implications for lobstermen were still unclear, but they hazarded a guess that the stunningly high numbers of legal-sized lobsters that fishermen had been catching might start to drop along parts of the coast this coming fall. It was the first time a statement from Steneck had sounded anything like what government scientists had been claiming for decades.

But what he was saying was quite different. Government scientists had been arguing that low egg production could lead to a population collapse. Steneck and his colleagues were suggesting that the decline they had witnessed had nothing to do with either egg production or a collapse. The ecologists believed that egg production was reasonably stable—perhaps even at a surplus, thanks in part to V-notching—but that something was affecting how many eggs survived. Very probably, they thought, fewer larvae than before were getting to the nursery grounds. The question was why.

Steneck, Wahle, and Incze are convinced that the culprit is the ocean itself. They don't deny that a certain number of eggs is necessary for a sustainable fishery, but they argue that even if lobstermen were to protect many more lobsters and allow them to produce eggs, larval biology and ocean currents would still have the final say in whether those eggs became new lobsters. And, as any fisherman knows, the sea is fickle.

Ocean currents are decisive because they carry the larvae from the place where their mother hatches them to the nursery grounds where they settle on the bottom. Lobsters bearing eggs are found in many areas along the coast of Maine, but Steneck has identified what appear to be special concentrations of them in certain places. These findings indicate that some larvae are arriving at their nursery grounds having been hatched just around the corner, but others are probably coming from hundreds of miles away. Now that the ecologists have an idea where egg-bearing lobsters are on the one hand and where nursery grounds are on the other, they hope to track the exact oceanographic links between the two.

Incze, the oceanographer of the group, speaks of "retention" of local larvae and "delivery" of distant larvae. He believes that depending on currents, any given nursery ground can experience both, or one without the other, or—in the worst case—neither. "As oceanographic conditions change and steer currents toward shore, bringing larvae with them, you can have a large increase in the number of settlers coming from different areas of egg production," Incze says. "Alternatively, when those currents steer the water offshore, you can have an entire region decline in settlement." That might explain why the number of larvae and baby lobsters decreased in the second half of the 1990s.

Incze is studying why these changes in oceanographic conditions occur. "Ice melting in the Arctic, cloud cover, and prevailing winds can all affect how water moves around the Gulf of Maine in specific ways," he says. Incze will also be examining the possible influence of the North Atlantic Oscillation, a variation in the distribution of high- and low-pressure systems over the Atlantic Ocean that affects weather patterns and ocean currents. "The North Pacific Oscillation has

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been well studied," Steneck points out, "and we know it affects the Hawaiian spiny lobster." If the ecologists can learn why currents vary, and can track these variations within the Gulf of Maine, their understanding of what drives the size of the lobster population from one year to the next will dramatically improve.

Scientists will never be able to prevent declines in the lobster population caused by ocean currents, but Steneck and his colleagues hope to be able to warn lobstermen of them accurately, by monitoring the abundance of larvae and baby lobsters. And if Josef Idoine turns out to be right, and egg production drops off dangerously, that should show up too, as a decrease in the number of big lobsters being counted by sea sampling and submarine dives. Either way, the catches of the coming decade will reveal whether the system the ecologists have developed is indeed predictive. Steneck is confident it will work. It's not a ridiculous notion: in recent years a similar system has successfully predicted catches in the rock-lobster fishery of western Australia.

Whether or not lobsters are being overfished, lobstermen face some serious problems. If the banner years end and catches return to their previous levels, overfishing might become a more plausible danger, because there are far more traps in the water than there used to be. And even if no biological disaster ever occurs, an economic one might. Fishermen who have invested too heavily in their equipment will suffer if catches decline, as will families who have grown accustomed to a higher standard of living. Some lobstermen fishing today have no memory of the slower-paced, less lucrative kind of lobstering that the older generation knew. That is because they started lobstering recently—after the collapse of other fisheries. On the whole, however, lobstermen in Maine are thoughtful and broad-minded stewards of a communal resource, and they understand that fishing sustainably is in their best interest. As one Islesford lobsterman puts it simply, "We throw back for tomorrow."

Bruce Fernald's father, Warren, is confident that the lobster population is in good shape. But given what he's seen in his half century of lobstering, he also admits that a decline in catches might be just what the industry needs. "I always relish a shakeout," he says. "Sometimes scoundrels get into the fishery. After a shakeout they don't do so well. The guys that have been hanging in there do okay."

Halfway through last summer Bruce Fernald was afraid a shakeout might already have arrived, too soon for his taste. The lobstering in the spring and

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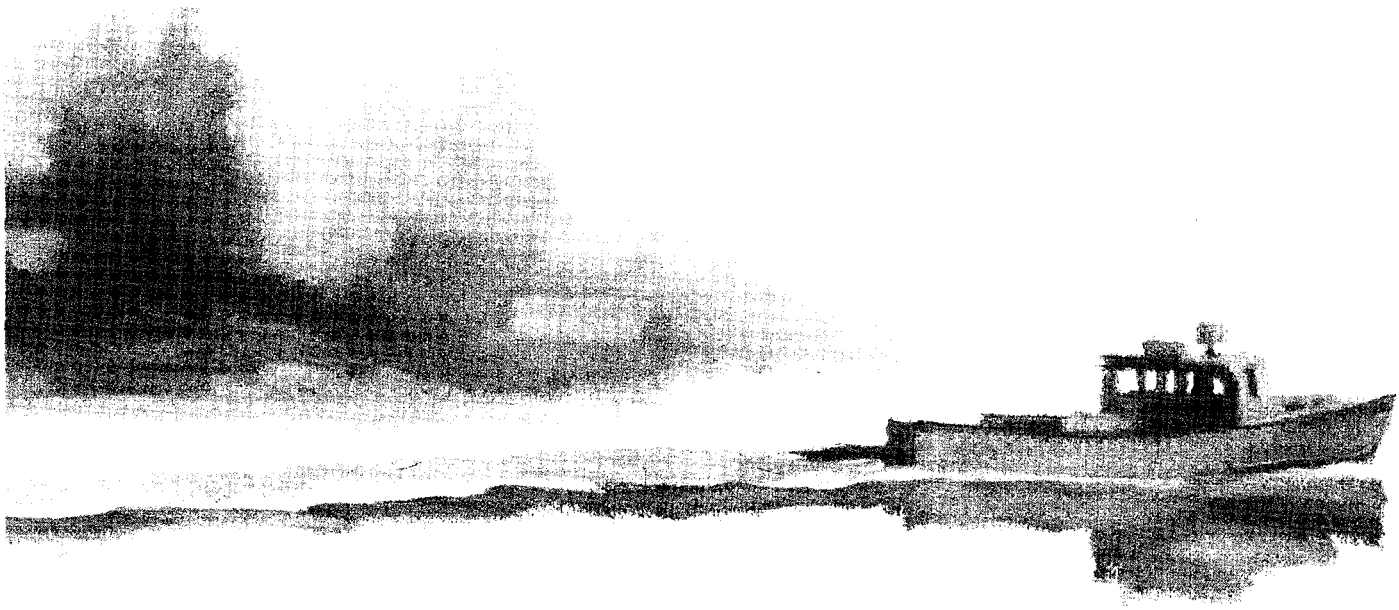

summer had been mysteriously dismal, and some of the Islesford lobstermen were beginning to worry that the annual run of shedders would never materialize.

On the day last July when Robert Steneck was exploring with his ROV in the waters off Islesford, Fernald finished hauling his traps early—there wasn't much in them—and decided to swing by the *Connecticut*. The afternoon breeze was whipping up a light chop, so Fernald had to jockey his boat up to the side of the *Connecticut* with agile flicks of the throttle and well-timed twirls of the wheel. Steneck emerged on deck and traded banter with Fernald across the trough of seawater splashing between them.

"So far this is the worst season I've ever had!" Fernald shouted over the thump of his diesel engine. "But I'm seeing more oversized lobsters, V-notched lobsters, and eggers than ever."

"That's good!" Steneck shouted back. "We're picking up a lot of larvae in the water. For the long term, maybe things aren't so bad. And I think you're going to start seeing shedders in your traps any day now. We're seeing them on the bottom."

"I'll believe it when I see it," Fernald answered. He backed his boat away from the research ship, leaving a frothy wake. "Come by the island for a beer sometime!" Fernald shouted, saluting Steneck as he pulled away.

A few minutes later the VHF radio on Fernald's boat sputtered to life, and a scratchy voice came over the airwaves. It was Jack Merrill, who had earlier in the day given Steneck coordinates for finding big lobsters. He was calling Steneck on the *Connecticut* from where he was fishing, fifteen miles out to sea.

Steneck responded, and after a brief exchange said to Merrill, "I don't know if it makes any difference to you where you're fishing, Jack, but I just told Bruce that over here we're starting to see some shedders."

"Oh, yeah?" Merrill said, sounding incredulous. "Throw a few in my traps, will you?"

"Yeah, right!" Steneck said.

The voice of another Islesford fisherman crackled through on the radio. "You saw shedders?" he said, his tone almost pleading. "Where the hell are you? Stay right there, I'm on my way."

As it turned out, the lobstermen of Islesford didn't need submarines to find their lobsters after all. In the middle of August the shedders came on like never before. The fishermen counted their blessings and fished like crazy. A

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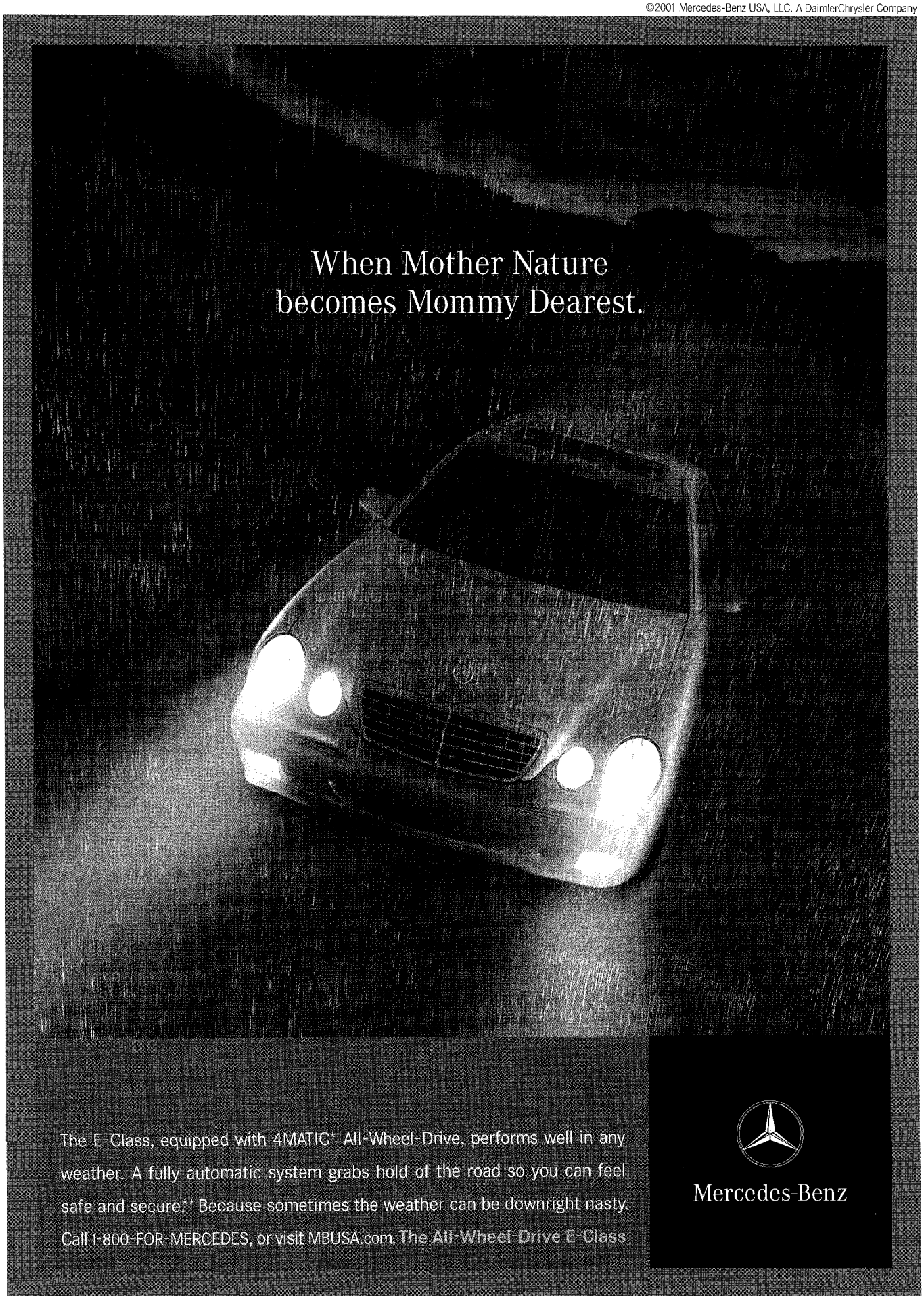

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RAW MATERIAL

A short story

BY A. S. BYATT

Illustration by Marc Yankus

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He always told them the same thing to begin with: "Try to avoid falseness and strain. Write what you really know about. Make it new. Don't invent melodrama for the sake of it. Don't try to run, let alone fly, before you can walk with ease." Every year he glared amiably at them. Every year they wrote melodrama. They clearly needed to write melodrama. He had given up telling them that creative writing was not a form of psychotherapy. In ways both sublime and ridiculous it clearly was precisely that.

The class had been meeting for fifteen years. It had moved from a schoolroom to a disused Victorian church. The village was called Sufferacre, which was thought to be a corruption of *Sulfuris Aquae*. It was a failed Derbyshire spa. It was his home town. In the 1960s he had written a successfully angry, iconoclastic, and shocking novel called *Bad Boy*. He had left for London and fame, and returned quietly ten years later. He lived in a trailer in somebody's paddock. He traveled widely, on a motorbike, teaching creative writing in pubs, schoolrooms, and arts centers. His name was Jack Smollett. He was a big, shuffling, smiling, red-faced man, with longish blond hair, who wore cable-knit sweaters in oily colors and bright scarlet neckerchiefs. Women liked him, as they liked enthusiastic Labrador dogs. They almost all felt—and his classes were predominantly female—more desire to cook apple pies and Cornish pasties for him than to make violent love to him. They believed he didn't eat sensibly. (They were right.) Now and then someone in one of his classes would point out, as he exhorted them to stick to what they knew, that they themselves were what *he* "really knew." Will you write about *us*, Jack? No, he always said, that would be a betrayal of confidence. You should always respect other people's privacy.

In fact he had tried unsuccessfully to sell two different stories based on the confessions (or inventions) of his class. The students offered themselves to him like raw oysters on pristine plates. They told him horror and bathos, daydreams, vituperation, and vengeance. They couldn't write; their inventions were crude, and he couldn't find a way to perform the necessary operations to spin the muddy straw into silk, or turn the raw, bleeding chunks into a savory dish. So he kept faith with them, not entirely voluntarily. He did care about writing. He cared about writing more than anything—sex, food, beer, fresh air, even warmth. He wrote and rewrote perpetually in his trailer. He was rewriting his fifth novel. *Bad Boy* had been written in a rush just out of school and snapped up by the first publisher he'd sent it to. It was what he had expected. His second novel, *Smile and Smile*, had sold 600 copies, and was remaindered. His third and fourth, frequently rewritten, lay in brown paper, stamped and restamped, in a tin chest in the trailer. He didn't have an agent.

Classes ran from September to March. In the summer he worked at literary festivals, or at holiday camps on sunny islands. He was pleased to see the classes again in September. He still thought of himself as wild and unattached, but he was a creature of habit. He liked things to happen at precise, recurring times, in precise, recurring ways. More than half the students in his classes were old faithfuls who came back year after year. Each class had a nucleus of about ten. At the beginning of the year this was often doubled by enthusiastic newcomers. By Christmas many of these would have dropped away—seduced by other courses, or intimidated by the regulars, or overcome by domestic drama or personal lassitude. St. Antony's Leisure Center was gloomy because of its high ceiling, and drafty because of its ancient doors and windows. The students had brought oil heaters, and standard lamps with imitation stained-glass shades. The old churchy chairs were pushed into a circle under these pleasant lights.

He liked the lists of their names. Sometimes he talked about how much Nabokov had got out of the list of names of Lolita's classmates, how much of America, how strong an image from how few words. His current class ran

Abbs, A	deacon in the C of E
Archer, M	estate agent
Armytage, B	vet
Forster, R	out-of-work bank teller

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Fox, C	eighty-two-year-old spinster
Hogg, M	accountant
Parson, A	schoolmistress
Pearson, A	farmer
Pygge, C	nurse
Secrett, L	intermittent student, daughter of
Secrett, T	living on alimony (her own phrase)
Silver, A	librarian
Wheelwright, R	student (engineering)

The most recent work they had produced was

Adam Abbs	A tale of the martyrdom of nuns in Rwanda
Megan Archer	A story of the abduction and prolonged rape of an estate agent
Blossom Armytage	A tale of the elaborate torture of two Sealyham dogs
Bobby Forster	A tale of the entrapment and vengeful slaughter of an unjust driving examiner
Cicely Fox	How we used to blacklead the stove
Martin Hogg	Hanging, drawing, and quartering under Henry VIII
Anita Parson	A tale of unreported, persistent child abuse and Satanic sacrifice
Amanda Pearson	A tale of a cheating husband hacked down by his vengeful wife with an axe
Gilly Pygge	Clever murder by a cruel surgeon during an operation
Lola Secrett	The nervous breakdown of a menopausal woman with a beautiful and patient daughter
Tamsin Secrett	The nervous breakdown of a feckless teenager with a wise but powerless mother
Annabel Silver	A sadomasochistic initiation of a girl sold into white slavery in North Africa
Rosy Wheelwright	A cycle of very explicit lesbian love poems involving motorbikes

He had learned the hard way not to involve himself in their lives. When he had first moved into the trailer, he had had a conventional enough vision of its warm confinement as a secret place to take women, for romping, for intimacy, for summer nights of nakedness and red wine. He had scanned his new classes, fairly obviously, for hopefuls, measuring breasts, admiring ankles, weighing pink round mouths against wide red ones against unpainted severe ones. He had had one or two really good athletic encounters, one or two tearful failures, and one overkill, which had left him with a watcher who stared, shivering, every night at the gate of his paddock, or occasionally peered wildly through the trailer window.

Creative writers are creative writers. Descriptions of his bed linen, his stove, the blasts of wind on his trailer walls, began to appear, ever more elaborated, in the stories that were produced for general criticism. Competitive descriptions of his naked body began to be circulated. Heartless or cowering males (depending on the creative writer) had thickets, or wiry fuzzes, or patches as soft as a dog fox, or scratchy-bristly reddish outcrops of hair on their chests. One or two descriptions of fierce thrusting and pubic clamping were followed by anticlimax, both in life and in art. He gave up taking women from his classes onto his unfolded settee. He gave up talking to his students one at a time or differentiating between them. The sex-in-a-trailer theme wilted and did not resuscitate. His stalker went to a pottery class, transferred her affections, and made stubby pottery pillars, glazed with flames and white spray. As the folklore of his sex life diminished, he became mysterious and authoritative and found he enjoyed it. The barmaid at the Wig and Quill came round on Sundays. He couldn't find the right words to describe her orgasms, prolonged events with staccato and shivering rhythms alternating oddly, and this teased and pleased him.

He sat alone in the bar of the Wig and Quill the evening before his class, reading the "stories" that were to be returned. Martin Hogg had discovered the torture that consists of winding out the living intestines on a spindle. He couldn't write, which Jack thought was just as well; he used words like "gruesome" and "horrible" a lot, but was unable, perhaps inevitably, to raise in a reader's mind any image of an intestine, a spindle, pain, or an executioner. Jack supposed that Hogg was enjoying himself, but even that was not very well conveyed to his putative reader. Jack was more impressed by Bobby Forster's fantasy of the slaughter of a driving examiner. This had some plot to it—involving handcuffs, severed brake cables, the removal of signs indicating quicksand, even an unbreakable alibi for the mild man who had turned on his tormentor. Forster occasionally produced a sharp, etched sentence that was memorable. Jack had found one of these, by sheer chance, in Patricia Highsmith, and another in Wilkie Collins. He had dealt with this plagiarism rather neatly, he thought, by underlining the sentences and writing in the margin, "I have always said that reading excellent writers, and absorbing them, is essential to good writing. But it should not go quite so far as plagiarism." Forster was a white-faced, precise person, behind round glasses. (His hero was neat and pale, with glasses that made it hard to see what he was thinking.) He said mildly, on both occasions, that the plagiarism was unconscious, must have been a trick of memory.

Jack came to "How We Used to Blacklead the Stove." Cicely Fox was a new student. Her contribution was handwritten—with pen and ink, not even felt-tip.

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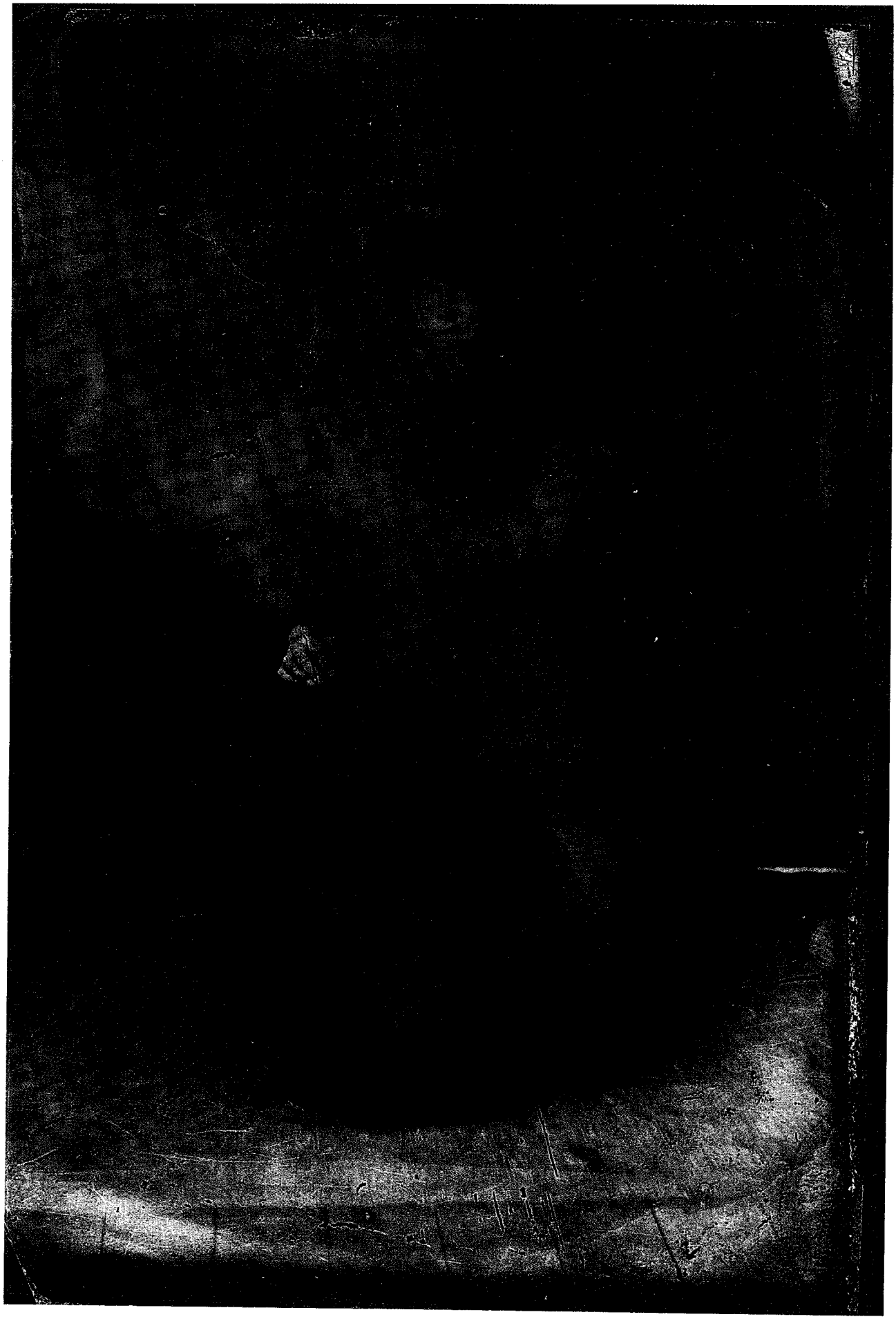

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How We Used to Blacklead the Stove

It is strange to think of activities that were once so much a part of our lives that they seemed daily inevitable, like waking and sleeping. At my age these things come back in their contingent quiddity, things we did with quick fingers and backs that bent without precaution. It is today's difficult slitting of plastic wraps, or brilliantly blinking microwave LED displays, that seem like veils and shadows.

Take blackleading. The kitchen ranges in the kitchens of our childhood and young lives were great, darkly gleaming chests of fierce heat. Their frontage was covered with heavy hasped doors, opening on various ovens, large and small, various flues, the furnace itself, where the fuel went in. Words are needed for extremes of blackness and brightness. Brightness included the gold-glitter of the rail along the front of the range, where the tea towels hung, and the brass knobs on certain of the little doors, which had to be burnished with Brasso—a sickly yellowish powdery liquid—every morning. It included also the roaring flame within and under the heavy cast-iron box. If you opened the door when it was fully burning, you could hear and see it—a flickering transparent sheet of scarlet and yellow, shot with blue, shot with white, flashing purple, roaring and burping and piffing. You could immediately see it dying in the rusty edges of the embers. It was important to close the door quickly, to keep the fire "in." "In" meant *contained*, and also meant alight.

Many different blacks surrounded that range. Various fuels were burned in it, unlike modern Agas, which take oil, or anthracite. I remember coal. Coal has its own brightness, a gloss, a sheen. You can see the compacted layers of dead wood—millions of years dead—in the strata on the faces of the chunks of good coal. They shine. They give out a black sparkle. The trees ate the sun's energy, and the furnace will release it. Coal is glossy. Coke is matte, and looks (indeed is) twice-burned, like volcano lava; the dust on coal glitters like glass dust, the dust on coke absorbs light, is soft, is inert. Some of it comes in little regular pressed cushions, like pillows for dead dolls, I used to think, or twisted humbugs for small demons. We ourselves were fed on charcoal for stomach upsets, which may explain why I considered the edibility of these lumps. Or maybe even as a small child, I saw the open mouth of the furnace as a hellhole. You were drawn in. You wanted to get closer and closer; you wanted to be able to turn away. And we were taught at school about our own internal combustion of matter. The ovens behind other doors of the range might conceal the puffed, risen shapes of loaves and tea cakes, with that best of all smells, baking yeast dough, or the only slightly less delightful smell of the crust of a hot cake—toasted sugar, milk, and egg. Now and then—the old ranges were temperamental—a batch of buns in frilled paper cups would come out black and smoking and stinking of destruction, ghastly analogies of the cinder cushions. From there, I thought, came the cinders that fell from the mouths of bad children in fairy tales, or stuffed their Christmas stockings.

The whole range was bathed in an aura of kept-down soot. In front of our own, at one time, was a peg rug made by my father, by hooking strips of colorful scraps of cloth—old flannel shirts, old trousers—through sacking, and knotting them. Soot infiltrated this dense thicket of flags or streamers. The sacking scalp was stained sooty black. The crimsons and scarlets, the green tartans and mustard blotches, all had a grain of fine, fine black specks. I sometimes thought of the peg rug as a bed of ribbon seaweed. The soot was like the silted sand in which it lay.

Not that we did not brush and brush ceaselessly, to cleanse our firesides of this falling, sifting black dust. It rises lightly, and falls where it was; it whirls briefly when disturbed, and particles may settle on one's own hair and scalp, a soot-plug for every pore in the skin of the hands. You can collect only so much; the rest is displaced, volatile, recurring. This must be the reason why we spent so much time—every morning—making the black front of the black stove blacker with black lead. To disguise and tame the soot.

"Black lead" was not lead but a mixture of plumbago, graphite, and iron filings. It came as a stiff paste, and was spread across and worked into all the black surfaces, avoiding the brassy ones of course, and then buffed and polished and made even with brushes of different densities, and pads of flannel. It was worked into every crevice of every boss on that ornate casting, and then removed again—the job was very badly done if any sludge of polish could be found encrusted around the leaves and petals of the black floral swags along the doors. I remember the phoenix, who must, I think, have been the trademark of that particular furnace. It sat, staring savagely to the left, on a nest of carved crossed branches, surrounded by an elaborate ascending spiral of fat flames with pointed tongues. It was all blackest black, the feathered bird, the burning pyre, the kindled wood, the bright angry eye, the curved beak.

The black lead gave a most beautiful, subtle, and gentle sheen to the blackness of the stove. It was not like boot blacking, which produced a mirrorlike lacquer. The high content of graphite, the scattering of iron filings, gave a silvery leaden surface—always a *black* surface, but with these shifting hints of soft metallic lightness. I think of it as representing a kind of decorum, a taming and restraining of both the fierce flame inside and the uncompromising cast iron outside. Like all good polishing (almost none of which persists in modern life, for which on the whole we should be grateful), the sheen was built up layer by infinitesimal layer, applied and almost entirely wiped away again, only the finest skin of mineral adhering and glimmering.

The time is far away when we put so much human

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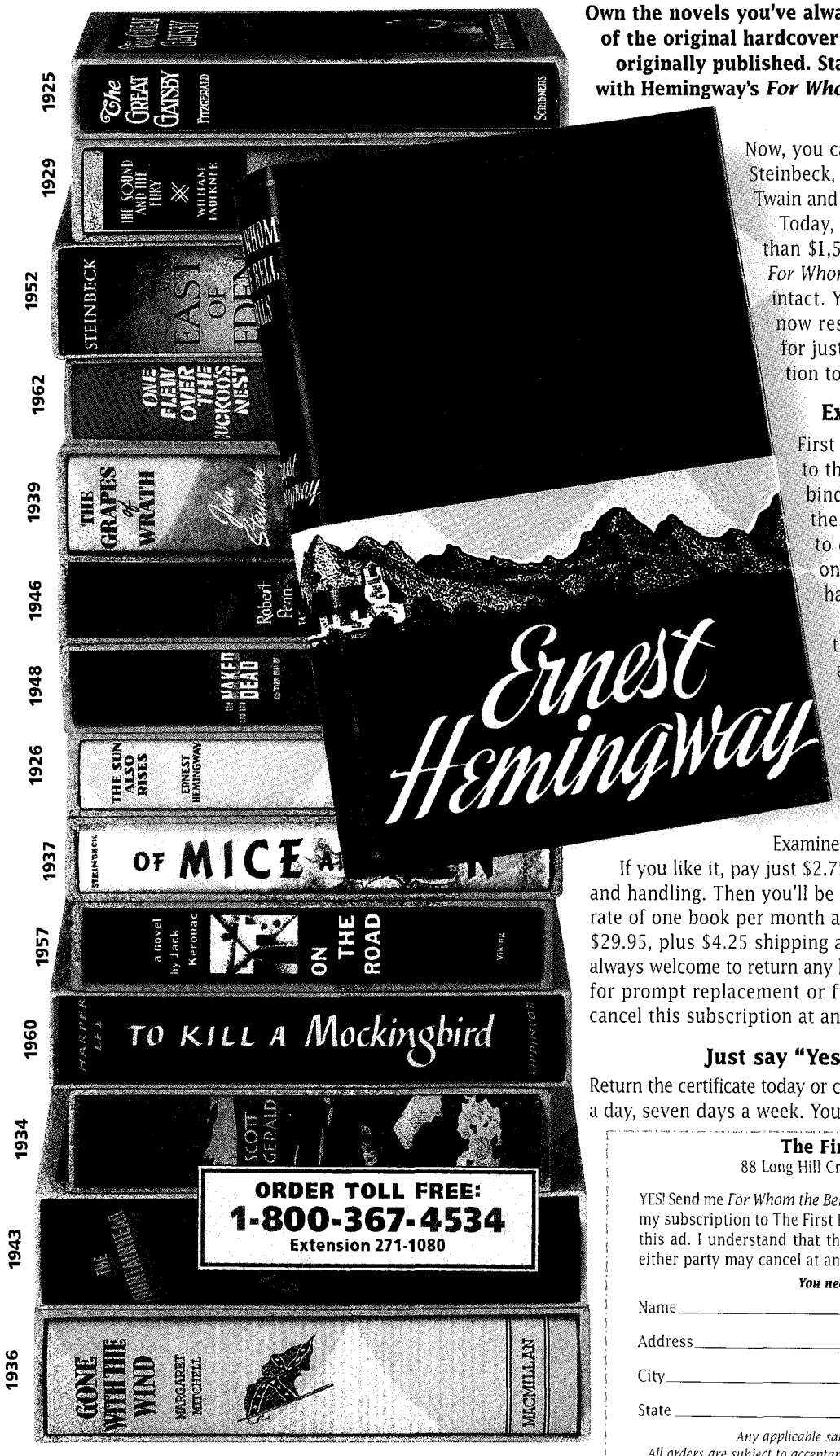

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blood and muscle into embellishing our houses with careful layers of mineral deposits. Thinking of black lead made me think of its opposite, the white stone and the ground white-stone powder with which we used, daily or more often, to emphasize our outer doorsteps and windowsills. I remember distinctly smoothing the thick pale stripe along the doorstep with a block of some stone, but I cannot remember the name of the stone itself. It is possible that we simply called it "the stone." We were required to stone the step only when we didn't have a maid to do it. I thought of holystone, blanching stone (perhaps a fabrication), and a run through the *Oxford English Dictionary* added whetstone and sleekstone, a word I hadn't known, which appears to refer to something used on wet clothes in the laundry. Finally I found hearthstone, and hearthstone powder, a mixture of pipe clay, carbonate of lime, size, and stone blue. Hearthstone was sold in chunks by peddlers with barrows. I remember the sulphur in the air from the industrial chimneys of Sheffield and Manchester, a vile, yellow, clogging deposit, which smeared windows and lips alike, and stained the brave white doorsteps almost as soon as they were stoned. But we went out and whitened them again. We lived a gritty, mineral life, with our noses and fingers in it. I have read that the black lead was toxic. I thought of the white lead with which Renaissance ladies painted their skins and poisoned their blood. "Let her paint never an inch thick, to this favour shall she come." I remember the dentists, giving us gobbets of quicksilver in little corked test tubes to play with. We spread this on our play table with naked fingers, watching it shiver into a multitude of droplets, rolling it back together again. It was like a substance from an alien world. It adhered to nothing but itself. Yet we spread it everywhere, losing a silvery liquid bead here, under a splinter of wood, or there, in the fibers of our jumpers. Quicksilver, too, is toxic. No one told us.

Hearthstone is an ancient and ambiguous idea. In the past the hearth was a synecdoche for the house, home, or even family or clan. (I cannot bring myself to use that humiliated and patronized word "community.") The hearth was the center, where the warmth, the food, and the burning were. Our hearth was in front of the black-leaded range. We had a "sitting room," but its grate (also regularly blackleaded) was always empty, for no one visited formally enough to sit in its chilly formality. Yet the hearthstone was applied to what was in fact the lintel or limen, the threshold. Northerners keep themselves to themselves. The hearthstone stripe on the flagstone step was a limit, a barrier. We were fond of a certain rhetoric. "Never cross my threshold again." "Don't darken my door." The shining silvery dark and the hidden red-and-gold roar were safely inside. We went out, as my mother used to say, feet first, on our final crossing of that bar. Nowadays, of course, we all go into the oven. Then, it was back to the earth, out of which all these powders and pomades had been so lovingly extracted.

Jack Smollett realized that this was the first time his imagination had been stirred by the writing (as opposed to the violence, the misery, the animosity, the shamelessness) of one of his students. He went eagerly to his next class, and sat down next to Cicely Fox while they waited for the others to arrive. She was always punctual, and always sat alone in the pews in the shadows, out of the multicolored light of the lampshades. She had fine white hair, thinning a little, which she gathered in a soft roll at the back of her neck. She was always elegantly dressed, in long, fluid skirts and high-necked jumpers inside loose shirt-jackets, in blacks, grays, silvers. She wore, invariably, a brooch on her inner collar, an amethyst in a circle of seed pearls. She was a thin woman; the flowing garments concealed bony sharpness, not flesh. Her face was long, her skin fine but paper-thin. She had a wide, taut mouth—not much lip—and a straight, elegant nose. Her eyes were the amazing thing. They were so dark that they were almost uniformly black, and they seemed to have retreated into the caverns of their sockets, being held to the outer world by the most fragile, spider-web cradle of lid and muscle, all stained umber, violet, indigo, as though bruised by the strain of staying in place. You could see, Jack thought fancifully, her narrow

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RIVERSIDE GHAZAL

Most watery of all the trees, these willows
stand in water. Ice pools around the ankles of willows.

A tree's name should reveal its nature.
Salix babylonica: the first word is for willow.

Doesn't it sound stretchy and pliable?
Babylonica is for the weeping part of willow.

From a quotation in Psalms: by the rivers of Babylon
we wept. The people hung harps on willows.

The weight gave them a bent, permanent shape.
A girl flings her hair down, a young willow.

A golden color, like a shout, all the length
of the fronds. They light up the willow.

Nearby on the concrete ramp, an ice-filled boat
waits for the sun to unmoor it, sail it past the willows.

In the season of thaw, this ice giving way.
By the rivers of America, we wept these willows.

—PATRICIA CLARK

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skull under its vanishing integument. You could see where her jawbone hung together, under fine vellum. She was beautiful, he thought. She had the knack of keeping very still, with a mild, attentive almost-smile on her pale lips. Her sleeves were slightly too long, and her thin hands were obscured most of the time.

He said he thought her writing was marvelous. She turned her face to him with a vague and anxious expression.

"*Real* writing," he said. "May I read it to the class?"

"Please," she said, "do as you wish."

He thought she might have difficulty in hearing. He said, "I hope you are writing more?"

"You hope ...?"

"You are writing *more*." Louder.

"Oh, yes. I am doing washday. It is therapeutic."

"Writing isn't therapy," Jack Smollett said to Cicely Fox. "Not when it's good."

"I expect the motive doesn't matter," Cicely Fox said, in her vague voice. "One has to do one's best."

He felt rebuffed, and didn't know why.

He read "How We Used to Blacklead the Stove" aloud to the class. He had a fine voice, and often—not always—he did more justice to the writing than its author might have done. He could also, in the right mood, use the reading as a mode of ironic destruction. His practice was not to name the author of the piece. It was usually easy enough to guess.

He enjoyed reading "How We Used to Blacklead the Stove." He read it *con brio*, savoring the phrases that pleased him. For this reason, perhaps, the class fell upon it like a pack of hounds, snarling and ripping at it. They plucked merciless adjectives from the air. "Slow." "Clumsy." "Cold." "Pedantic." "Pompous." "Show-off." "Over-ornate." "Nostalgic."

They criticized the pacing equally gaily. "No drive." "No sense of urgency." "Rambling." "All over the place." "No sense of the speaker." "No real feeling." "No living human interest." "No reason for telling us all this stuff."

Bobby Forster had spent the whole of the previous term writing a "memoir" of his early sexual experiences, exam failures, illnesses, getting back remorselessly at those who had, as he saw it, impeded the free progress he should have been making. He was extremely hostile to Cicely Fox's black lead. He said the author substituted things for people. He said detachment wasn't a virtue; it just covered up inadequacy. Come to the point, Bobby Forster said. Why should I care about a daft toxic cleaning method that's thankfully obsolete? Why doesn't the writer give us the feelings of the poor skivvy who had to smear the stuff on?

Tamsin Secrett was equally severe. She had written a heartrending description of a mother lovingly preparing a meal for an ingrate who neither turned up to eat it nor telephoned to say she was not coming: "Tender succulent al dente pasta fragrant with spicy herbs redolent of the South of France with tangy melt-in-the-mouth Parmesan, rich smooth virgin olive oil, delicately perfumed with truffle, mouth-wateringly full of savor ..." Tamsin Secrett said that description for its own sake was simply an *exercise*, every piece of writing needed an *urgent human dimension*, something *vital at stake*. "How We Used to Blacklead the Stove," Tamsin Secrett said, was just mindless heritage journalism. No bite, Tamsin Secrett said. No bite, her daughter, Lola, agreed. Memory Lane. Yuck.

Cicely Fox sat rigorously upright and smiled at their animation. She looked as though all this had nothing to do with her. Jack Smollett did not know how much she had heard. He, unusually, retaliated irritably on her behalf. He said that it was rare to read a piece of writing that worked on more than one level at once. He said that it took skill to make familiar things look strange. He quoted Ezra Pound: "Make it new." He quoted William Carlos Williams: "No ideas but in things." He did this only when he was fired up.

Cicely Fox did not come to the pub with the rest of the class. Jack could not offer to drive her home—the idea of her frail, bony form on his motorbike was impossible. He realized that he was trying to think of ways to get to talk to her, as if she were a pretty girl.

The best he could do was to sit next to her in the church during the coffee break. This was hard, because everyone wanted his attention. But—because of her deafness, perhaps—she sat slightly separate from the others, so he could move next to her. But then he had to shout.

"I was wondering, what do you read, Miss Fox?"

"Oh, the old things. They wouldn't interest you young people. Things I used to like as a girl. Poetry increasingly. I find I don't seem to want to read novels much anymore."

"I had put you down as a reader of Jane Austen."

"Had you?" she said vaguely. "I suppose you would," she added, without revealing whether or not she liked Jane Austen.

He felt snubbed. He said, "*Which* poems, Miss Fox?"

"These days, mostly George Herbert."

"Are you religious?"

"No. He is the only writer who makes me regret that for a moment. He makes one understand grace. Also, he is good on dust."

"Dust?" Jack dredged his memory and came up with "Who sweeps a room as for thy laws / Makes that and the action fine."

"I like 'Church Monuments.' With death sweeping dust with an incessant motion: 'Flesh is but the glass, which holds the dust / That measures all our time; which also shall / Be crumbled into dust.' And then I like the poem where he speaks of his God stretching 'a crumme of dust from Hell to Heaven.' Or 'O that thou shouldst give dust a tongue to cry to thee / And then not heare it crying.'"

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"He knew," Cicely Fox said, "the proper relation between words and things. 'Dust' is a good word."

WASHDAY

In those days washing took all the week. We boiled on Monday, starched on Tuesday, dried on Wednesday, ironed on Thursday, and mended on Friday. Besides all the other things there were to do. We washed outside, in the wash-house, which was an outhouse with its own stone sink, hand pump, copper with a fire beneath it, and flagged floor. Other implements were the monstrous mangle, the great galvanized tubs, and the ponch. Our wash-house was made of stone blocks, with a slate roof, and houseleeks growing on the roof. Its chimney smoked, and its windows steamed over. In winter the steam melted the ice. It was full of the extremes of a watery climate. As a child, I used to put my face against the stones and find them hot to touch, or anyway warmish, on washday. I pretended it was the witch's cottage in fairy tales.

The first step was sorting and boiling. You boiled whites in the copper, which was a huge rounded vat with a wooden lid. All the wood in the wash-house was soap-slippery, both flaked apart and held together by melted and congealed soap. You boiled the whites—sheets, pillowcases, tablecloths, napkins, tea towels, and so on, and then you used the boiled water, let down a bit, in the tubs, to wash the more delicate things, or the colored things, which might run. You had heavy wooden pincers and poles to stir the whites in the boiling water; steam came off in clouds, and a kind of gray scum formed on the surface. When they were boiled, they went through various rinses in tubs. There would be a hiss and a slopping as the hot cloth hit the freezing water in the tubs. Then you ponched it. The ponch was a kind of copper-kettle-like thing on a long pole, full of holes, like a vast tea infuser or a closed colander. It soughed and sucked at the cloth in the water, leaving little bosses of pulled damask or cotton where it had impressed itself and clung. Then with pincers—and your bare arms—you hoisted all the weight of the sheets from one tub to another tub to another. And then you folded the streaming stuff and wound it through the wooden jaw-rollers of the mangle. The mangle had red wheels to turn the rollers, and a polished wooden handle to turn the wheels. It sluiced soapy water back into an undertub, or splashed it on the floor. You were also always pumping more water—yanking the pump handle, winding the mangle handle. You froze; you were scalded. You stood in clouds of steam and breathed an air that was always full of thick sweat—your own sweat, with the effort—and the odor of the dirt from the clothes that was being released into the air and the water.

You had to pull the washed clothes through, or soak them in, things like Reckitt's Blue. I don't know what that was made of. Because we lived in Derbyshire, I always associated it with Blue John, from the Peaks, which I know is quite wrong, but is a verbal association that has lingered. It came in little cylindrical bags, wrapped in white muslin, and produced an intense cobalt color when the little bags were swirled in the rinsing water. The whites went through the blue water (which was always cold). I don't know by what optical process this blue staining made the whites whiter, but I can clearly remember that it did. It wasn't bleach. It didn't remove recalcitrant stains of tea, or urine, or strawberry juice—you had to use real bleach for that, which smelled evil and deathly. The Reckitt's Blue went out into the water in little clouds, and fibrils, and tendrils of color. Like fine threads of glass in glass marbles. Or blood, if you put a cut finger in a dish of water. You couldn't see Reckitt's Blue very well in the galvanized tubs, but on days when the laundry was light, we did the bluing in a white enamel pancheon, and then you could see the threading cloud of bright blue going into the clear water and mingling, until the water was blue. Then you swirled the cloth in the blue water—swirled it, and squashed it, and punched and *mashed* it, until it was impregnated with blue, until all the white glistened in pale blueness. As a very little girl, I used to think the white cloth and the blue water were like clouds in the sky, but this was silly. Because in fact in the sky the white watery clouds stain the blue, not the other way round. It was an inversion, a draining. For when you held up the sheets and took them from the blue water to drain them, you could see the blue run away and the white whiter, blue-white, a different white from cream, or ivory, or scorched-yellow white, a white under blue dripping liquid that had been changed, but not dyed.

The starch was viscous and gluey; it thickened the washing water like gruel. I suppose it was a kind of gruel, if you think of it. Farinaceous molecules expanding in heat. Starch was slippery and reminded all of us of substances we didn't like to think of, bodily fluids and products, though in fact it is an innocent, clean, vegetable thing, unlike soap, which is compressed mutton fat, however perfumed. Cloth slipped into starch and was coated with it. There were degrees of starching. Very dense, glutinous starch was used for shirt collars, light, spun-glass starch for delicate nightdresses and knickers. When you hoisted a garment out of a bath of starch, it stiffened and fell into flutes like a carving—or if by mistake you left it lying around, and it dried out, it would become solid crumples and lumps, like pleated stones where the earth had folded on itself. Starched clothes had to be ironed damp. The smell of the hot iron on the jelly was like a parody of cookery. Gluten, I suppose. You could smell scorching as you could smell burning cakes. You had a nose for things not as they should be.

Clothes in the process of being cleansed haunted our lives. They were accompanying angels, souls washed white in the blood of the Lamb, surrounding us with their rustle and their pale scent. In the eighteenth century, I

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imagine, washdays happened once or twice a year, but our time was obsessed with cleansing and had not invented mechanical helpers. We went through an endless cycle of bubble, toil, and trouble, surrounded by an only too visible inanimate host. Our clothes danced in the wind, fluttering vain arms, raising full-bellied skirts to reveal vacancy, coiling round each other like white worms. Indoors they hung in the kitchen on long racks winched up to the ceiling, from where they dangled, stiff as boards, like shrouded hanging men. They lay neatly folded, before and after ironing, like dead choirboys in effigy, fluted and frilled. Under the hot iron (on Thursdays) they writhed and winced and shrank. My great-aunt's huge, shapeless rayon petticoats flared all colors of the rainbow, spectral, sizzling russets and air-force blues, shot with copper, shot with peacock blue. They melted easily, gophering into scabs that resolved themselves into pinholes and were unredeemable. The irons were filled with hot coals from the kitchen range. They were heavy; they had to be watched for soot-smears, which would condemn a garment to an immediate return to the washpot. Inside them the coals of fire smoldered, spat, and dimmed. The kitchen was full of the smell of singeing, a tawny smell, a parody of the good golden cooking smells of buns and biscuits.

It was hard work, but work was life. Work was coiled and woven into breathing and sleeping and eating, as the shirt sleeves coiled and wove themselves into a tangle with nightdress ribbons and Sunday sashes. In her old age my mother sat beside a twin-tub washing machine, a mechanical reduction of all those archaic containers and hoists and pulleys, and lifted her underwear and pillowcases from wash to rinse to spin with the same wooden pincers. She was arthritic and bird-boned, like a cross seagull. We offered her a new machine with a porthole, which would wash and dry a little every day and, we thought, relieve her. She was appalled and distressed. She said she would feel dirty—she would feel *bad*—if she had no washday. She needed steam and stirring to convince her that she was alive and virtuous. Toward the end the increasing number of soiled sheets defeated her, and perhaps even killed her, though I think she died not from overexertion but from chagrin when she finally had to admit she could no longer wield her ponch or lift a bucket. She felt unnecessary. She had a new white nightdress which she had washed, starched, and ironed but never worn. It was ready to shroud her still white flesh in her coffin, its Reckitt's Blue glinting now livelier than the shrunken, bruised yellow-gray of her eyelids and lips.

The creative-writing class liked this slightly sinister study of cleanliness no better than its predecessor. They introduced the word "overwritten" into their remorseless criticisms. Jack Smollett reflected, not for the first time, that all adult classes contained an element of kindergarten regression. Group behavior took over, gangs formed, victims were selected. Intense jealousies developed over the teacher's attention, and intense resentments over any show of partiality from the teacher. Cicely Fox was becoming a "teacher's pet." Nobody had spoken much to her during the coffee breaks before Jack's enthusiasm for her work became apparent, but now she was greeted with deliberate cutting and cold-shouldering.

Jack knew what he ought to do, or to have done. He should have kept his enthusiasm quiet. Or quieter. He was not quite sure why he felt so obliged to insist that Cicely Fox's writings were the real thing, the thing itself, to the detriment of good order and good will. He felt he was standing up for something, like an ancient Wesleyan bearing witness. The "something" was writing, not Miss Fox herself. She dealt with the criticism of her adjectives, the suggestions for livening things up, by smiling vaguely and benignly, nodding occasionally. But Jack felt that he had been teaching something *muddy*, an illegitimate therapy, and suddenly here was writing. Miss Fox's brief essays made Jack want to write. They made him see the world as something to be written. Lola Secrett's pout was an object of delighted study: the right words *would be found* to distinguish it from all other pouts. He wanted to describe the taste of the nasty coffee, and the slope of the headstones in the churchyard. He loved the whirling nastiness of the class because—perhaps—he could write it.

He tried to behave equitably. He made a point of not sitting next to Cicely Fox during the coffee break of the "Washday" session; instead he went and talked to Bobby Forster and Rosy Wheelwright. Bobby Forster said he had acquired the entrance forms for a competition for new writers in the literary supplement of a Sunday paper. A big prize—£2,000—was at stake, along with the promise of publication and a further promise of interest from publishers.

Bobby Forster said he thought he stood a pretty good chance of getting some attention. "I've been thinking I ought to move on from being a literary learner driver, you know." Jack Smollett grinned and agreed.

When he got home, he typed up "How We Used to Blacklead the Stove" and "Washday" and sent them to the newspaper. The entries had to be submitted under a pseudonym. He chose Jane Temple for Cicely Fox—Jane for Austen, Temple for Herbert. He waited, and in due course received the letter he had never really expected not to receive—all this was *fated.* Cicely Fox had won the competition. She should get in touch with the newspaper, in order to arrange printing, prize-giving, an interview.

He was not sure how Cicely Fox would react to this. He was by now somewhat obsessed by the idea of her, but he did not feel that he knew her, in any way. He dreamed of her, often, sitting in the corner of his trailer with her neat hair, scarfed neck, and fragile, cobweb skin, studying him with her darkly hooded eyes. She was

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judging him for having abandoned, or not having learned, his craft. He knew that he had called up, created, this unnerving muse. The real Cicely Fox was an elderly English lady who wrote to please herself. She might well regard his actions as impermissible. She came to his class but did not submit herself to his or its judgment. But she judged. He was sure she judged. The prize he had, so to speak, put her in the way of winning was a propitiatory offering. He wanted—desperately—that she should be pleased, be happy, admit him to her confidence.

He got on his motorbike and drove for the first time to Miss Fox's address, which was on a road called Primrose Lane, in a respectable suburb of Derby. The houses there were late-Victorian semi-detached, and had a cramped look, partly because they were built of large blocks of pinkish stone and something was wrong with the proportions. The windows were heavy sash windows, in black-painted frames. Cicely Fox's windows were all veiled in heavy lace curtains—not blue-white but creamy white, he noticed. He noticed the pruned rosebushes in the front garden, and the donkey-stoned sill of the front step. The door was also black, and in need of repainting. The bell was set in a brass boss. He rang. No one answered. He rang again. Nothing.

He had worked himself up to this scene—the presentation of the letter, her response, whatever it was. He remembered that she was deaf. The gate to the alley alongside the house was open. He walked in, past some dustbins, and came into a back garden with a diminutive lawn and some ragged buddleia. And a rotary clothes drier, with nothing hanging from it. A back door stood above white-lined stone steps. He knocked. Nothing. He tried the handle, and the door swung inward. He stood on the threshold and called, "Miss Fox! Cicely Fox! Miss Fox, are you there? It's Jack Smollett."

He heard no reply. He should have gone home at that point, he thought later, over and over. But he stood there undecided, and then he heard a sound, a sound like a bird trapped in a chimney, or a cushion falling from a sofa. He went in through the back door and crossed a gaunt kitchen, of which he had afterward only the haziest recollection—dingy wartime "utility" furniture, a stained sink, hospital-green cupboards, an ancient gas cooker with one leg propped unsteadily on a broken brick. Beyond the kitchen was a hall with a linoleum floor and a curious smell. It was a smell both human and musty, the kind of smell overlaid in hospitals by disinfectant. But he smelled no disinfectant here. The hall was dark. Dark, narrow stairs rose into darkness inside ugly boxed-in banisters. He went on tiptoe, creaking in his biking leathers, and pushed open a door into a dimly lit sitting room. Across the room, in a chair, was a moaning bundle with a huge face, gray-skinned, blotched, furred with down, above which a few white hairs floated on a bald pink dome. The eyes were yellow, vague, and bloodshot, and did not seem to see him.

In the opposite corner was an overturned television. Its screen was smeared with something that looked like blood. Next to it he saw a pair of naked feet, at the end of long, stringy, naked legs. The rest of the body was bent around the television. Jack Smollett had to cross the room to see the face, and until he saw it, did not think for a moment that it belonged to Cicely Fox. It was turned into the worn, sprigged carpet, under a mass of disheveled white hair. The whole naked body was covered with scars, scabs, stripes, little round burn marks, fresh wounds. He could see a much more substantial wound in the throat. Fresh blood was splattered on the forget-me-nots and primroses in the carpet. Cicely Fox was quite dead.

The old creature in the chair made a series of sounds—a chuckle, a swallowing, a wheeze. Jack Smollett made himself go across and ask her, What has happened? Who? Is there a telephone? The lips flapped loosely, and a kind of twittering was all the answer he got. He remembered his mobile phone and went out, precipitately, into the back garden, where he phoned the police and then was sick.

The police came, and were diligent. The old woman in the chair turned out to be a Miss Flossie Marsh. She and Cicely Fox had lived together in that house since 1949. Miss Marsh had not been seen for many years, and no one could be found who remembered her having spoken. Nor, despite all the efforts of the police and doctors, did she speak, then or ever. Miss Fox had always been briskly pleasant to her neighbors, but had not encouraged contact or invited anyone in, ever. No one ever found any explanation for the torture that appeared to have been applied to Cicely Fox, clearly over a considerable period of time. Neither woman had any living relatives. The police found no sign of any intruder other than Jack Smollett. The newspapers reported the affair briefly and ghoulishly. A verdict of murder was brought in, and the case lapsed.

Jack Smollett's class was temporarily subdued by Miss Fox's fate. Jack's miserable face made the students uneasy. They fetched him coffee. They were kind to him. He couldn't write. Cicely Fox's death had destroyed his desire to write, as surely as the black lead and the washday had kindled it. He dreamed repeatedly, and had waking visions, of her poor tormented skin, her bleeding neck, her agonized jaw. He knew, he had seen, and he couldn't get down what had happened. He wondered if Miss Fox's writing had in fact been a desperate therapy for an appalling life. Those old scars were many-layered. Not only on Miss Fox but also on the mute Flossie Marsh. He *could not* write that.

The class, on the other hand, buzzed and hummed with the anticipated pleasure of writing it up one day. The students were vindicated. Miss Fox belonged after all in the normal world of their writings, the world of domestic violence, torture, horror, and shock. They would write what they knew, what had happened to Cicely Fox, and it would be most satisfactorily therapeutic. A

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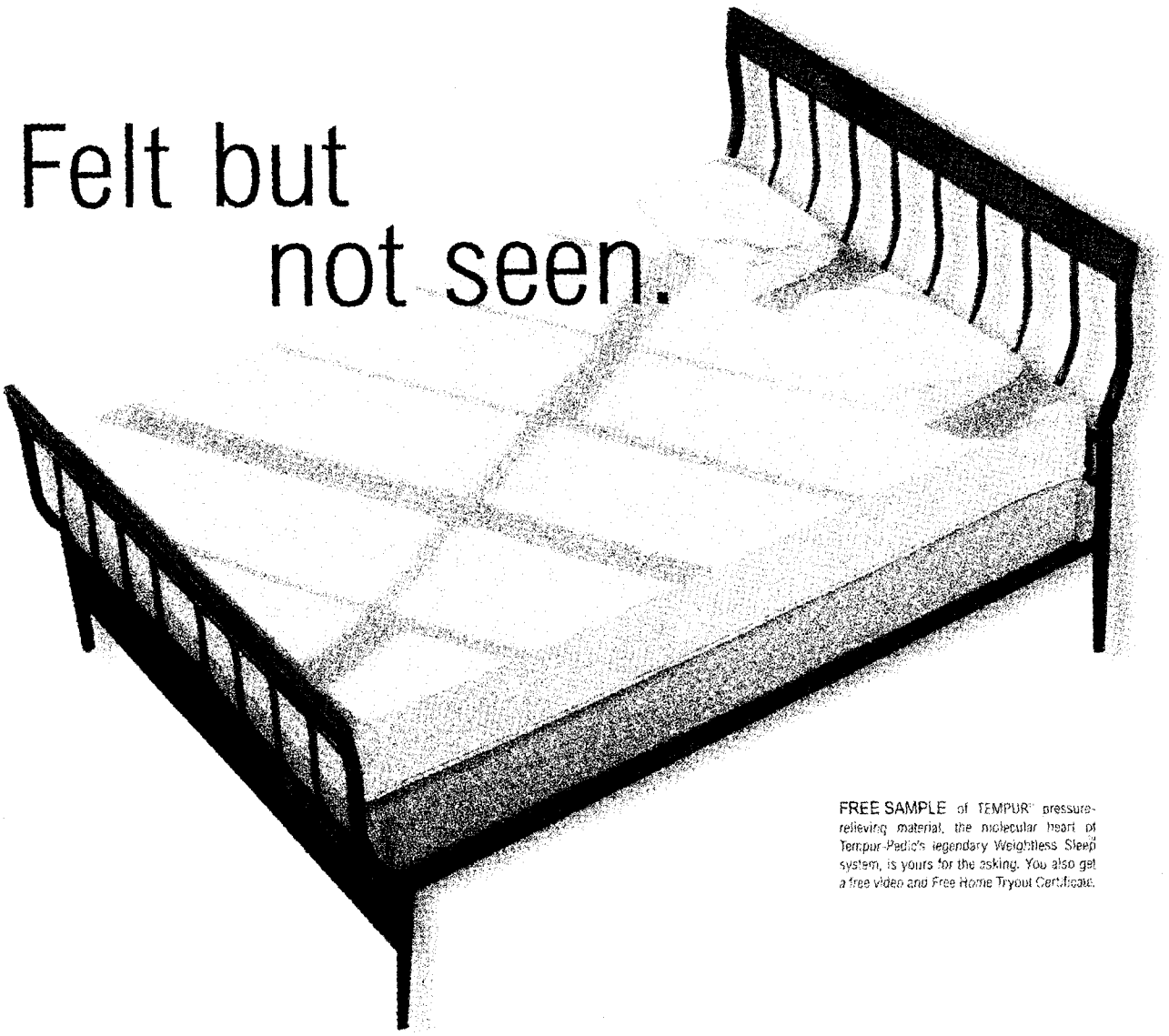
Felt but not seen.



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CONSERVATIVE MEN IN CONSERVATIVE DRESSES

The world of cross-dressers is for the most part a world of traditional men, traditional marriages, and truths turned inside out

BY AMY BLOOM

Photographs by Mariette Pathy Allen

.....

Heterosexual cross-dressers bother almost everyone. Gay people regard them with disdain or affectionate incomprehension, something warmer than tolerance but not much. Transsexuals regard them as men "settling" for cross-dressing because they don't have the courage to act on their transsexual longing, or else as closeted and so homophobic that they prefer wearing a dress to facing their desire for another man. Other straight men tend to find them funny or sad, and some find them enraging. The only people on whose kindness and sympathy cross-dressers can rely are women: their wives and, even more dependably, their hairdressers, their salespeople, their photographers and makeup artists, their electrolysists, their therapists, and their friends.

Drag queens make sense to most of us. They represent a congruence of sexual orientation, appearance, and temperament—feminine gay men dressing as women for a career, like RuPaul, or, less lucratively, for prostitution, or to express their sense of theater and femininity. (Barney Frank as a drag queen makes no more sense, intuitively, than Dick Cheney as one.) Actors whose most famous performance is as a female—from Barry Humphries, with his brilliant and textured Dame Edna, to Flip Wilson, with his one-note gag of Geraldine—don't puzzle us. Tootsie and Mrs. Doubtfire and the boys in *Some Like It Hot* don't puzzle us; they're just men doing what they have to do to survive, learning a nice lesson about the travails of womanhood, and giving one on the benign uses of masculine self-esteem. Even the cross-dressing women of history, women from many countries and every century since the ancient Greeks—from Joan of Arc to Pope Joan to America's jazz-playing Billy Tipton, from Little Jo Monaghan, the cowpoke, to Disney's adorable Mulan—don't puzzle us; they chose to live as men because they couldn't otherwise have the lives they wanted.

Heterosexual cross-dressers—straight men who have not only a wish but a need to wear women's clothes and accessories—manage to be marginal among heterosexual men, marginal among other men who wear women's clothes, marginal in the community of sexual minorities, and completely acceptable only to fetishists, who take anyone who claims to belong. Gay men do not say, "Oh, you're a straight man who likes to wear a dress? Welcome aboard." Straight men do not say, "Well, except for the dress thing, you're just like me. Howdy, pardner." Even in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where cross-dressers hold their annual fall Fantasia Fair, few of the residents, gay or straight, seem to recognize these men as people with whom they have a lot in common.

Many heterosexual cross-dressers never come out of the closet, not even to their wives. Others tell their wives after ten or twenty or thirty years of marriage, sometimes because they've been caught wearing their wives' clothes, sometimes because the clothes have been discovered. (The revelation that a man himself is the "other woman" is a staple of cross-dresser histories.) Heterosexual cross-dressers often spend their whole adult lives ordering size 20 cocktail dresses from catalogues and dressing in secret, with only the mirror for company. But lots of these men, driven by loneliness, by unmet narcissistic needs (all dressed up and nowhere to go), by risk-taking impulses (it's not hard to grasp that a forty-five-year-old 240-pound former Marine strolling through the Mall of America in full drag is consciously courting risk), want to cross-dress outside their bedrooms. Engineers and accountants, truck drivers and computer programmers, disproportionately represented among the retired military, predominately Christian and predominately conservative (far more moderate Republicans than liberal Democrats), these men go to get-togethers in Kansas City, in Pittsburgh, in Seattle, all over America. They make forays into malls in pairs, and they go to tolerant gay bars in small groups. They browse in the Belladona Plus Size Shop of Beverly, Massachusetts, and they hang out at Criss/Cross Consultants, of Houston, which offers special package rates for shopping, a

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makeover, and dinner at a restaurant. They go to weekly or monthly meetings, of six or ten or twenty guys, in Nashua, New Hampshire, and Trenton, New Jersey, in Springfield, Missouri, and Water Mill, New York, and throughout the Bible Belt. Arizona has enough cross-dressers to support chapters in both Phoenix and Tucson. A man who cross-dresses and needs to be seen can go to conferences like Fantasia Fair and Fall Harvest, in the Midwest, or take trips on any number of cruise lines that happily host groups of cross-dressers and their spouses amid a thousand other guests sailing to Catalina and other destinations.

Sometimes the wives wish to come, to support their husbands and to enjoy the trip, or to hang out with other wives, like golf widows or wives in Al-Anon. Some come because their husbands need them to. "I don't mind, but really, if he could learn to do his makeup properly and fasten his own bra, I'd rather stay home," one woman told me at Fall Harvest 2000. (Later she called to say that she had bought her husband a video guide to makeup for men and a magnifying mirror, and that she was resigning as his dresser. "He can ask one of the other guys to hook his bra," she said.) Happy wives are everyone's favorites, but happy or cowed, enthusiastic or grimly accepting, the wives at these functions are simultaneously objects of much public appreciation and utterly secondary to the men's business. The world of cross-dressers is for the most part a world of traditional men, traditional marriages, and truths turned inside out.

Reliable statistics about the number of heterosexual cross-dressers don't seem to exist. In the fall of 2000 I spent several weeks trying to pin down that number. I checked with the International Foundation for Gender Education, in Waltham, Massachusetts, which acts as switchboard, referral service, news agency, and educational center for both cross-dressers and transsexuals, and with GenderPAC, a lobbying organization, but neither group knew. "Too many guys in the closet," a voice at the IFGE said. "How could anyone presume to count?"

I called Ray Blanchard, the head of clinical sexology services at Canada's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, a self-described "traditional clinician" who has been studying sexuality for thirty years. "No one knows," he told me. "I consulted several colleagues, and the consensus is that we have no useful epidemiological information. Period."

I checked with Jane Ellen and Frances Fairfax, of Tri-Ess, the Society for the Second Self, "an international support and social organization for Heterosexual Cross-dressers, their spouses, partners, children and friends." The Fairfaxes live in Texas, where Jane Ellen is otherwise a physician and the father of three boys, two in college and one in prep school. The Fairfaxes told me that at last count 1,100 cross-dressers and 320 wives belonged to Tri-Ess's thirty chapters nationwide, but they didn't know the total number of heterosexual cross-dressers either.

"Maybe three or four million," Jane Ellen hazarded. "Maybe somewhere between three and five percent of the adult [male] population. People who claim it's more—I think that's just, you know, a minority wanting to be bigger than it is. And people who say more like one or two percent—I think those are the ones who are ashamed." When I asked Ray Blanchard for an estimate, he agreed that three to five percent sounded about right.

There are really only two points of agreement between Blanchard and the Fairfaxes: that no one knows how many heterosexual cross-dressers there are, and that all these men in dresses who assert that they are straight, sometimes to the point of annoyance, are straight.

Jane Ellen: A Man With a Mission

Tri-Ess was founded in 1976, as a melding of several cross-dressing groups, including the historic Hose and Heels Club, which began meeting in California, in 1961, and which is to many cross-dressers what Stonewall is to gay men: the beginning of the end of shame (although not, for the cross-dressers, the end of fiercely preserved anonymity). The Fairfaxes are now the driving force behind Tri-Ess. For some cross-dressers, Tri-Ess is a beacon of hope in a society that labels them weirdoes and queers when they know they are not. For critics within the cross-dressing community, the Fairfaxes are good people who are misguided, even self-deceiving, about the nature of cross-dressing.

Jane Ellen is a man with a mission: to save cross-dressers from their worst selves and to preserve their marriages. Frances, firm but unassuming, competent, and mild except when offended, is his partner in this, and has been the secretary of Tri-Ess's board of directors (of which Jane Ellen is the chair) since 1988. A central tenet of Tri-Ess is that cross-dressing is a gift—that wearing women's clothes is both relaxing and expressive of a feminine self that is nurturing and gentle—and that it can enhance any marriage if the wife is wise enough to appreciate it and strong enough to corral what can be, as Jane Ellen admits, a narcissistic, self-indulgent habit. In the words of "Do You Know Someone Who Is a Crossdresser?," on the Tri-Ess Web site,

> Most [cross-dressers] are ordinary men who have discovered a feminine aspect to their personalities, and desire to transcend the narrow stereotypes mandated by conventional society. Happy in their masculinity, they have simply discovered a feminine gender "gift" and decided to explore it ... There is within each man a set of personality potentials that are part of his birthright, but that society labels as "feminine" and says he should suppress. Crossdressers have made contact with these potentials and found their expression fulfilling. Integrating these into their whole personalities, crossdressers are able to smooth off some of the macho rough edges programmed by their upbringing. The result is a healthier whole person.

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Once a wife or partner realizes her mate isn't leaving her for another man or for a new life as a woman, or taking risks that could destroy their financial and family life, the two of them can seek a balanced solution ... Many of the traits that attracted her in the first place—sensitivity, kindness, appreciation of beauty, etc.—can now be seen as belonging to that "woman within."

The Fairfaxes believe that heterosexual cross-dressers are just normal folks, not at all like those gender outlaws—bearded men in dresses, "chicks with dicks"—whom Jane Ellen calls "gender mockers." The Fairfaxes want cross-dressers out of the closet, not because Tri-Ess wishes to defy or upend society, but because they believe that if society understood how normal cross-dressing is, resistance to it would vanish; it would be seen as no stranger a form of relaxation than golf. The words that Ray Blanchard uses when he talks about cross-dressing—"fetish," "continuum of gender dysphoria," "narcissism," "erotic self-absorption"—are words the Fairfaxes don't ever want to hear. They are upset when cross-dressing is viewed as being about sex, or as unusual (although they know it is), because they realize that they are exactly the kind of folks—Christians, family people, Texans—that George W. Bush wants and needs. When you say "cross-dresser," Jane Ellen and Frances want you to think only of a guy relaxing in a dress.

"Of course it's not relaxing," Blanchard says, with some heat. "Heels and makeup and a wig and a corset? It's preposterous. Even women don't find that relaxing. Relaxing is a pair of sweatpants, clothing that doesn't even feel like clothing. Cross-dressers want to normalize this, to have it seen as relaxation and self-expression. I've had people say to me, 'You know, I bet if there wasn't all this stereotyping, these people would not choose to wear a dress.' I say that's nonsense. Cross-dressing is an attempt to resolve an internal conflict, and it's not about fabric. If we had clothing for men and women that was identical in every way except men wore shirts with four buttons and women had shirts with five, cross-dressers would want more than anything to have the shirt with five. We don't know why."

Our categories and descriptions are so narrow and self-protective that we don't have words for the drive to cross-dress; we don't have any language to describe the mixture of attraction and envy that often leads these men to have sex with women while thinking of themselves as male lesbians.

A brochure from the Fantasia Fair of 1986 encapsulates the cross-dresser's bind as he tries to describe what drives him.

What is a Crossdresser?

An individual, usually heterosexual, who desires and needs to dress in the clothing of the opposite sex at different times throughout his or her life. This compulsive behavior generally starts at a young age and the individual struggles alone for many years with this closeted need. Crossdressing is not a sickness, but represents a person who enjoys expressing another aspect of his personality

and gains both emotional and [illegible] pleasure from this transition. It is not a hobby, but a necessity and Cross-dressing is for life.

This seems to me to be the heart of cross-dressers' dilemma, and the heart of mine in writing about them. Cross-dressing is a compulsion, but we must not see it as a sickness. A good wife should tolerate it because the man has no choice, but it isn't too hard to tolerate because it's a gift. It is about fun and pleasure—and it's a necessity. The necessity of cross-dressing is frightening to the men and to their wives, and their wish to tame it, to characterize it as a preference and a gift, is understandable.

Jane Ellen told me, "Men are still being trained—well, you know, as Virginia Prince [the founder of Tri-Ess, and one of the godmothers of cross-dressing] says, 'Men are always trying to become what women are content to be.'"

"What is it that women are content to be?" I asked.

"Oh, you know, they know when to give it a rest. They know when and how to quit. They can relax and be themselves."

I did know. He meant that in his vision, idealized and old-fashioned, women are like oceans, or like fields, or like horses, and men are sailors, farmers, and cowboys, and that

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is their curse and that is women's blessing, although women may not realize it. It is exhausting to be a man, and delightful to kick off those demands and slip into something more comfortable. The longer I talked to the Fairfaxes, the less surprising their middle-of-the-road Republicanism became. It seemed odd only that their cross-dressing would make anyone think that they belonged at the same party as Queer Nation, Dykes on Bikes, and transsexuals who become lesbian feminists.

"A lot of men, myself included, want to go there, to be a feminine self, to slow down and stop striving," Jane Ellen told me.

"It sounds like yoga," I replied.

Jane Ellen was silent. It sounds like yoga except for the two hours of preparation time. It sounds like yoga except that it begins in a man's life as an erotic response and becomes an erotic fetish. Sometimes I put on lipstick when I'm tense. It makes me feel armored, less vulnerable to the world. That's not the same thing. I don't feel that the lipstick is essential to my being, that without it I must stay home, though I know that there is an erotic dimension to getting dressed up (it's not just cross-dressers who appreciate the silkiness of a slip, the slide of a stocking). When the dressing and the garments are the fuel for and the expression of one's sexual wishes, it is about sex, not gender.

"Cross-dressers' desires do not map onto anything in our world," Ray Blanchard says. "You will never know how they feel if you are not one of them. And they have to disconnect between reality and their fantasy. Otherwise their desires are too disruptive. It's too disruptive to acknowledge that you wish your penis was part of your wife's body and not yours. It's too disruptive to acknowledge that this is a sexual compulsion."

For all their talk of relaxation, the Fairfaxes are too smart to think, or to try to persuade me, that cross-dressing is ordinary, or that it's just a hobby. Fly fishing is a hobby. Spending two hours preparing yourself to walk through a mall or a hotel lobby hoping—hoping to the point of anxiety and arousal—that you will be perceived as female is not what anyone, not least the cross-dressers themselves, thinks of as a hobby.

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Levels of Joy

I am aboard the Carnival ship *Holiday*, waiting to meet twenty-five cross-dressers and their wives on a cruise to Catalina with about 1,400 other passengers. (Names and identifying details have been changed for many of the people in this article, at their request.) I am wondering what to wear to dinner and to a preliminary party in the suite of Mel and Peggy Rudd, my hosts. Peggy has written a number of books on cross-dressing, the best known of which is *My Husband Wears My Clothes* (1989), and was formerly the head of SPICE (the Spouses' and Partners' International Conference for Education), a Tri-Ess auxiliary conference for wives and girlfriends of "ordinary heterosexual men with an additional feminine dimension." (I've met the Rudds before. I traveled to Texas to interview them several years ago, when I first became interested in the less common ways in which people inhabit their gender. I stayed at their home, woke up in their astonishingly sunny and beribboned guest room, and walked down to the breakfast nook past a phalanx of posed photos: the Rudds with Ronald and Nancy Reagan, the Rudds with George and Barbara Bush. At breakfast Peggy said to Mel, "Oh, dear, we should have taken down all those pictures before Amy got here." Mel smiled. "Oh, I think she's a true liberal—she won't mind about the Republicans.")

I waffle about what to wear for nearly half an hour. Finally I decide that silk pants, a tank top, and sandals is right—for the level of dressiness of the dinner (which I have overestimated) and for my own social and appearance anxiety (which I have underestimated). When I walk into the party, the Rudds hug me and introduce me as "Amy the writer." Some men flinch, although the Rudds have told everyone to expect me. Tory, a good-looking young man from Mexico, shakes my hand and says, "Hello, Miss Amy." His aunt and his cousin and his girlfriend, Cory, are on this trip with him—his first time cross-dressing in public. Tory and Cory, with their happy sexual banter, his devoted relatives, and his final painstaking and successful transformation from Antonio Banderas to Daisy Fuentes, become the darlings of our group; they make everyone feel better.

I mingle with the rest of the guys and their wives. These men, to whom I will refer in print as "he," and to whom I refer in person when they are cross-dressed as "she," are not drag queens, hardworking perennials like Pearlene the Size Queen and Big-Boned Barbie, not Las Vegas female impersonators, and most definitely not gender-benders of any kind—not Marilyn Manson, not Prince. When cross-dressed, they look more like Mrs. Attanas, my formidable fourth-grade teacher, a big, tall woman with a bolsterlike bosom, thick legs, sensible pumps, hennaed hair, and twin spots of rouge on her cheeks. Like Jane Ellen Fairfax, they have the matronly look so common to straight cross-dressers. At first I thought this reflected some weird attachment to their mothers—that the image they wished to present was that of their own first woman. Hence the heavy foundation, the blue eye shadow, the big pearl-button earrings. I no longer think so. I've noticed the same look among their wives, and among lots of middle-aged women not much interested in changing fashions. These men are not regular readers of *Elle*, *Vogue*, or even *Ladies' Home Journal*.

I have met cross-dressers whose presentation is just this side of Christina Aguilera, and I have met a fifty-year-old midwestern engineer and a sixty-year-old born-again Christian CEO and a forty-year-old police captain who dress exactly as they would if they had been born on the distaff side, in clothes both contemporary and appropriate, whether Gap or Escada or Dress Barn. But though anatomy may not be destiny, it certainly lays a hand on our options. Most cross-dressers, and almost all married cross-dressers, live lives in which they are not cross-dressed. They don't take female hormones, and they usually don't have electrolysis even if they would like to (many express the wish to wake up and find themselves without facial, arm, or leg hair, but their wives are opposed). They cannot easily put together a natural, believable female appearance. First they need beard camouflage, to flatten and disguise the stubble, then powder over that and foundation over that. Sweating is a big problem. Jim Bridges, a transformation guide and guru, the creator of the videos *Bridges to Beauty 2000* and *Hollywood Makeup Secrets*, which are offered at his boutique in North Hollywood and through his booming Web business ("Can't tell you who in the House of Representatives, can't tell you who in the NFL," he told me while putting false eyelashes on a John Deere salesman at Fall Harvest 2000), counsels a quick swipe of antiperspirant on the upper lip and at the hairline. Cross-dressing is not only anxiety-provoking and arousing, it is also warm under the wig, the corset, the padding, the pantyhose. A pronounced face requires pronounced makeup, and after the false eyelashes and even the most subtle contouring of the wider jaw and the thick brow, one can look beautiful or ridiculous, but one cannot look like most of the women around.

At dinner I am seated with the Rudds, wearing nearly matching floral prints. To my right are Tory's aunt and cousin, who speak almost no English, and next to them is Lori, a Lee Remick lookalike, husband nowhere in sight. On the other side of her is a man in his late sixties, recently retired as a senior partner in a white-shoe law firm in the Deep South. He looks great. He looks like a Neiman Marcus matron, and if he seems a bit out of place, it is only because the cruise is so downscale: twenty-year-old guys are clumping around the casino in their NASCAR jackets, baseball caps, and hiking boots, as if a nice shirt and a pair of slacks would be way too much trouble.

To my left are Felicity and his wife. Felicity is a large, hunched man, made up in a very conventional, slightly stiff manner. He looks like a librarian, or perhaps the strong-minded wife of a minister; in fact he is a Southern Baptist

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minister from the very buckle of the Bible Belt. "So, you're the writer," he says. "Well, I'd say you pass pretty well." I smile pleasantly, as if I am not offended, as if I don't think he intended to offend me. He clears his throat twice and stares at my silk pants. "You gals just get to cross-dress all the time and no one says boo." He sounds furious that life is so easy for me and so hard for him, but because he is a minister, and even more because he is dressed as and representing someone named Felicity, he cannot be direct or angry; he has to try to convey a serene and gracious femininity regardless of his feelings. And his wife is beside herself, tight-lipped, hands clasped; she is a Christian woman doing what she must, and though she might wish otherwise, she cannot be pleased.

Felicity and Merrie, a large, sweet man on the other side of the table, take turns dominating the dinner conversation. There is a great deal that they both want me to understand, and they are also gratified, painfully gratified, by my attention, by the fact that I even think about them without horror. I come to see why so many women find themselves sympathetic to cross-dressers: women are raised to be sympathetic, and protective toward the vulnerable, and there is something sweet, unexpected, and powerful about being a woman and sympathizing with a man not because he demands it but because you genuinely feel sorry for him, for his debilitating envy and his fear of discovery and his sense of powerlessness to live as he wants. The supermodel Heidi Klum and her crowd may feel sorry for helpless men, whipsawed by passion every night of the week, but this is not a stance that society affords most women.

Over the next few days I meet most of the members of the Rudds' group. I meet a couple who look alike whether he's cross-dressed or not. I meet a shy, skinny engineer who attends the cruise talent show in a white stretch-velvet dress and a platinum Tina Turner shag. I meet Harry, who is always somewhat cross-dressed (women's jeans, women's sneakers) but never flamboyantly; his appearance is that of an effeminate man, and he doesn't bother with a femme name or seem to have any of the common need for a more feminine presentation. I would have thought this would be easier for his wife than a husband who called himself Lulu, spent hours in the bathroom making up his face, and paraded around in a strapless lavender tulle dress and matching pumps, but it's not.

"I love him," she tells me. "I love him, but I don't want a man who is excited by the idea of being a woman. We have two kids, he's a great dad, a good provider, but I want a man who's comfortable with masculinity. I don't want to be sisters ... or lesbians. If I wanted a woman, I would have found one by now. But ... other things are good." And he tells me, with great sadness, "She is the most supportive person in the world—and this is a terrible thing for her. We work on it, we struggle." He stops and gathers his defenses; throughout the cruise he will condescend to the men with femme names, the men who insist on elaborate makeup, because he sees himself as "evolved," free of the trappings and compulsions of cross-dressing. "All couples struggle," he says. "They fight about money, about sex. You can't tell me they don't. This is no different." He looks out at the ocean. "This *is* different, I know, but I refuse to let it ruin our lives."

Peggy Rudd is the boss and the model for the wives, their spokesperson, a movement spokesperson, the cruise director. Mel (or Melanie, as he calls himself when cross-dressed), all hearty kindness, a genial grandfather even in a dress and a bolero jacket, does not seem to have similar obligations. None of the men say to me, "I've learned so much from Mel." He is a good old boy in drag, always looking for a laugh, a little playful fun, another piece of bread and butter under Peggy's watchful eye (the whole table

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knows of his cholesterol troubles and hers). Although he does not make a pretty woman, he makes a reasonably convincing overweight, coarse-featured sixty-year-old woman, I think—but my eyes have adjusted: none of these guys look as tall or as large to me as they are.

One evening Peggy says, with a slightly pursed expression, "My next book is on joy: the difference between the level of joy that cross-dressers experience"—she holds her hand up over her head—"and the level of joy that their wives experience." Her hand drops to her waist. The cross-dressers around us say nothing. They nod, joyous astronauts sympathizing with the poor wives left behind and trying not to show how much better a time they are having. I think of the twinkle in Mel's eyes and the fact that nothing like a twinkle ever appears in Peggy's. It must be psychologically exhausting for her to turn this pain into a shared hobby, his compulsion into entertainment, his need into an occasion for celebration, and I feel ashamed that, knowing all that, I still prefer his company.

Every night the headwaiter becomes more and more camp and foolishly flattering; these people are big tippers, moderate drinkers, considerate of the staff, and extremely polite. On the third night of the cruise Felicity comes to dinner "en drab," as they say, looking like what he is—a heavyset Baptist minister who worked construction in his youth. With a flourish the headwaiter delivers roses to his wife, to applause from our four tables. Felicity puts his big hand on hers and squeezes it. He makes a toast to their thirty years of marriage and to her goodness and support. He begins to choke up; her remote look never changes. I can see that she is not pleased that he decided to dress like a man for her tonight. She is not pleased that he is so grateful to her for trying to believe that he cross-dresses only because he cannot express his warm and nurturing self while wearing trousers. Nor is she pleased, God knows, to sit with a bunch of men in makeup and dresses, some modest, some outrageous, some passable, most not, and call it an anniversary party. Later they come to talk to me, and when Felicity says that his path may be to minister to the transgendered, his wife puts her hand over her mouth and says quietly, "God will show us the way." She means, unmistakably, that the way will surely not be this one—that God cannot want her to be the wife of a cross-dresser who ministers to the transgendered.

Felicity says, "It's like there are three of me in this little boat: the husband, the cross-dresser, and the minister. I can hear the falls approaching, and I know, I know with all my heart, one of us will not survive this ride." He begins to cry, and I get tears in my eyes. As I hand him some tissues, his wife glares at me and says, "You sure do get involved with your interviews." She must think that some pretty fancy footwork is required to wind up so sorry for the cross-dresser and not for the wife; when I look at her sympathetically, she almost spits. Pity from people like me is not what she wants either. For the remainder of the trip Felicity seeks me out and his wife avoids me.

The Gleam in Their Eyes

After the cruise, after follow-up e-mails with Melanie and Peggy, and more phone calls with the Fairfaxes, I found that I had more to say than I had thought, and more concerns about saying it. I didn't want to demonize or pathologize any sexual preference or behavior that doesn't hurt anyone. I didn't want to make fun of fetishists. Now that our culture has begun to shift toward the notion that no mature reciprocal love between two people, of the same or opposite sex, is a disease, I didn't want to consign everyone who isn't just gay or straight to the *DSM* junkpile. I wanted to focus on people like Steve and Sue, happily married for more than thirty years and now often mistaken for a lesbian couple, or like the well-adjusted state trooper from Montana, whose John Wayne manner, walk, and wink never changed, even when he wore a black-lace cocktail dress, even when his pretty wife sat on his lap and kissed him, telling me, "That's just who he is. He's a fun person, a people person, and I guess the cross-dressing is part of it." The men I met were by and large decent, kind, intelligent, and willing to talk openly. Their wives were the same, many of them under the additional pressure of having to make the best accommodation they can to a marriage they did not envision and do not prefer.

But I do think that passion for a person, or a capacity to love people, is different from a sexual impulse that is directed toward an object or an act and that is greater than the desire for any person. And although one could argue that all desire focused on an object or even an act is a fetish, I don't think so—any more than I think that gender-reassignment surgery (even when it's known as gender-confirmation surgery) is no different from a tummy tuck. The greatest difficulty people have with cross-dressers, I think, is that cross-dressers wear their fetish, and the gleam in their eyes, however muted by time or habit, the unmistakable presence of a lust being satisfied or a desire being fulfilled in that moment, in your presence, even *by* your presence, is unnerving. The combination of the cross-dressers' own arousal and anxiety and our responsive anxiety and discomfort is more than most of us can bear. We may not mind foot fetishists, but we may not wish to watch them either.

The cross-dressers of Tri-Ess insist that cross-dressing is not about sexuality, and therefore not about sex. They are right about the first, and we can all stop assuming that any man who wears a dress is gay. But they are not right about the second, and their assertion, their defense, that cross-dressing is their creative expression of both genders is unsettling, because it is at such odds with their behavior, their natures, and their marriages. These men are as far from being gender warriors and feminists as George W. himself. As one wife said to me, "For twenty years he couldn't

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help with the dishes because he was watching football. Now he can't help because he's doing his nails. Is that different?" For these men, the woman within is entirely the Maybelline version, not the Mother Teresa version, not the Liv Ullman version, and not even the Tracey Ullman version. There is no innate grasp of female friendship, of the female insistence on relatedness, of the female tradition of support and accommodation for one's partner and giving precedence to the relationship overall. If there were that kind of understanding, rather than shopping for accessories and watching tapes on how to walk in heels, these guys would be unable to ask their wives to go through this cross-dressing life with them—and everyone, husbands

and wives, knows it. They know that if any of the women insisted on wearing three-piece suits or baseball uniforms in public, and asked their husbands to accept hairy legs, hairy underarms, and jockstraps as part of their sex life, the husbands would not be rushing off to join spousal support groups while cheerfully spending the family's money on bespoke shirts and expensive glue-on facial hair. The marriages would be over.

As with the *Ladies' Home Journal* of the 1950s, or *Cosmopolitan* of the seventies, eighties, and nineties, when I read Tri-Ess's advice to wives, I don't know whether to laugh or cry. The advice seems to be both traditional and optimistic, and when optimism seems impossible, the general tone is that love conquers fear and a good man is hard to find. If Dickens's Nancy were alive today (and Bill Sikes, his sadism aside, is exactly the kind of macho, overcompensating, risk-taking guy one might find cross-dressing), she would be in a wives' support group, happy to pick out a lipstick, apologizing if they ran out of Slim-Fast a week before the Harvest Ball.

Is it just delicious irony that makes so many people's eyes sparkle when I tell them about my Christian Republican cross-dressers? Is it something less sophisticated, like *schadenfreude*, or even less civilized, like homophobia? It is gratifying to yank the covers off hypocrites: the fundamentalist-Christian congressman with his handsome young pages, the old-school feminist who tolerates abusive boyfriends, the priest and his porn.

The widespread assumption is that heterosexual cross-dressers are hypocrites, publicly lambasting deviance of all kinds and dressing up in private like Little Bo Peep. There is still plenty of Little Bo Peep (and Scarlett O'Hara and Courtney Love) in private, but the lambasting has died down considerably since 1980. In the past cross-dressers were eager to disassociate themselves from gay men and about as interested in feminism as Ward Cleaver. Now the unimaginable has happened, and the landscape has changed. All the cross-dressers I spoke to expressed admiration for the gay civil-rights movement and hope that whatever acceptance gay people have won will somehow envelop cross-dressers too. Gay men and women turn out to be their role models in terms of self-respect, even if the cross-dressers are well aware that the gay community offers them tolerance but not a warm welcome. And feminism of the women-are-nicer-people variety, although not a part of the wives' lives, adds an unexpected aspect to the cross-dressers' self-image: in their remarks about the burdens of masculinity and the innate nurturing and graciousness of women, and in their attempts to connect with nature and spirit, they sound like the softest and most Goddess-worshiping of second-wave feminists.

Almost everything Tri-Ess has said about its members is true: they are straight and traditional men who love their wives and wear dresses. Just as Tri-Ess says, its Christian, conservative Republican men have a great deal more in common with other Christian, conservative Republican men than with anyone else. Their wives are not professional women with their own substantial incomes and career paths; and they are not royalty or Hollywood types who expose their spouses' peculiarities and let the muck cling to their kids. They try to make their marriages work, and if the price of a good provider and a decent man is not much sex and a certain amount of constant pain, it is not an unfamiliar bargain. The wives are not uniformly overweight, motherly, and devoid of self-esteem (as some mediocre research has suggested they are), or at least no more so than any other group of middle-class women married young to traditional and dominant men, devoted to home and family, and lacking in advanced education. Juggling the limited resources of time, money, and pleasure, balancing dominance and fear, self-deception and love, selfishness and desperation, cross-dressers and their wives struggle with one big difference—his compulsion—and otherwise, just as they have told me all along, they are just like everyone else. A

The photographs in this article are from Mariette Pathy Allen's book Transformations: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them.

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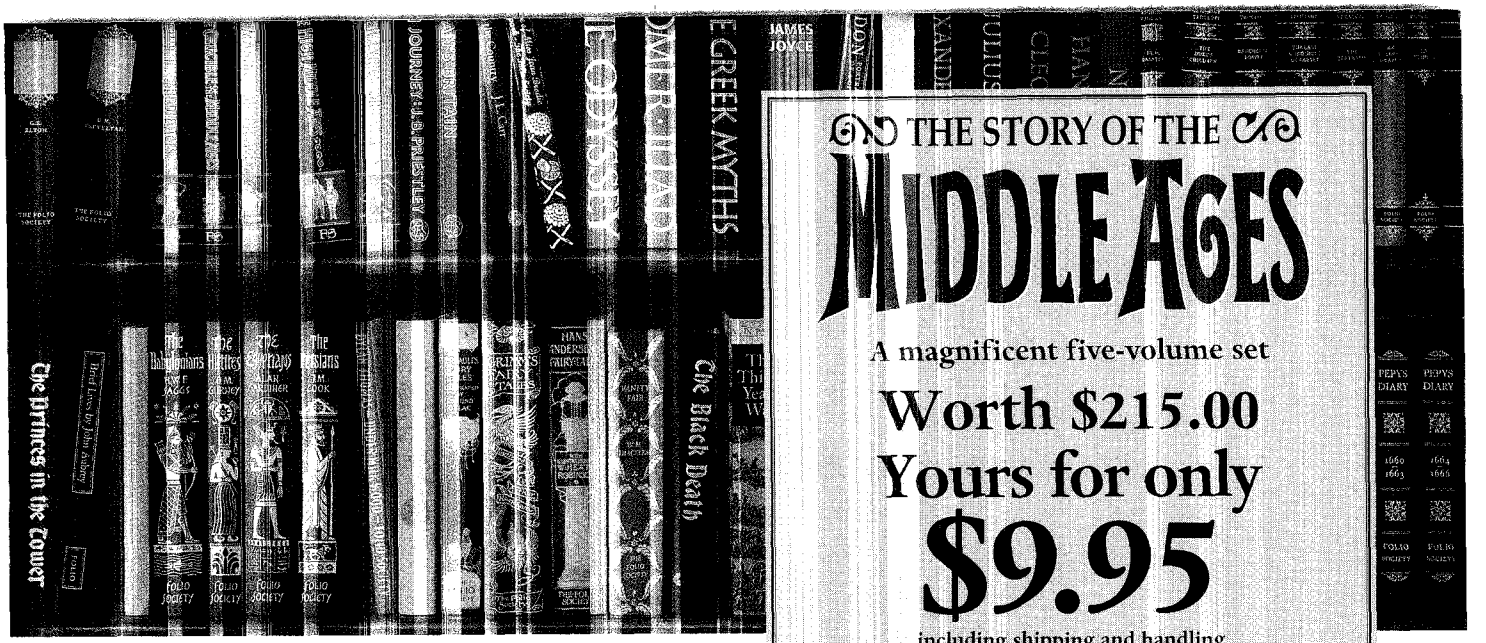

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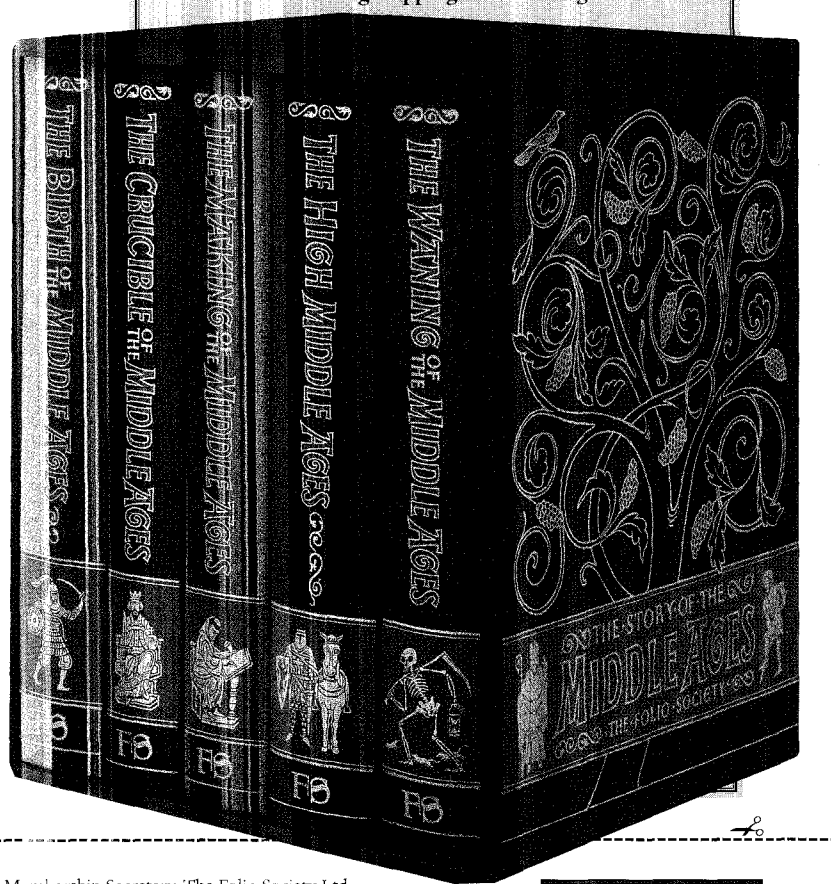

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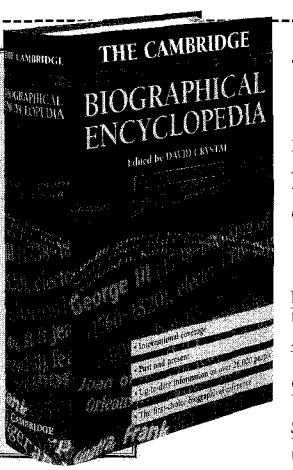

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TRAVEL

THE SPLENDOR OF ANGKOR

Now is the best time in many decades to visit Cambodia and its ancient Khmer capital

BY JAMIE JAMES

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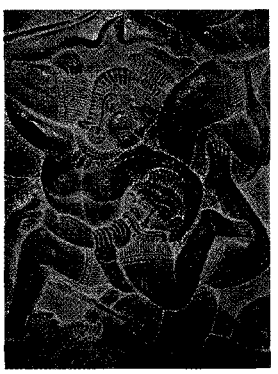

Travelers have been compiling lists ever since Antipater of Sidon came up with his Seven Wonders of the World, in the second century B.C. On my own list of wonders no place would have a more secure claim than Angkor, the capital of the ancient Khmer kingdom. Occupying 120 square miles of tropical forest near the present-day town of Siem Reap, in northwestern Cambodia, the archaeological district of Angkor consists of hundreds of sculptured stone Buddhist and Hindu temples built by the Khmer from the ninth century through the thirteenth. Many of the temples are in a state of tumbledown disarray, snarled in jungle vegetation; others are inaccessible because of uncleared land mines from the wars that devastated the region during the second half of the twentieth century. But dozens of temples, palaces, and other state buildings, including all the most important ones, are in good condition and can now be safely and conveniently visited. The artistic accomplishment and philosophical profundity of these monuments place the Khmer on a par with the most advanced civilizations of their time, anywhere in the world.

I'll never forget my first night at Angkor. In 1989 I traveled there with an archaeologist buddy of mine, Russell Ciochon, of the University of Iowa, to report on the restoration work that was then under way. One night we hired some policemen to accompany us to the Bayon, a massive, rambling Buddhist temple whose looming silhouette resembles a mountain crowned with fifty-four towers; each has four faces peering into the dense forest in the cardinal directions, and every face wears a placid, enigmatic expression—the famous "Angkor smile." In harsh daylight it's difficult to make out some of the faces, which are covered with lichen and lined with cracks, but that night was a clear one, and a full moon shone directly overhead, illuminating the faces plainly, as though it were an ethereal spotlight. When the roar of the insects, lizards, and frogs mysteriously subsided for a moment, and the cool night breeze quickened, I shivered, feeling farther from home than I had ever been before, in a place that I would never really know.

An experience like that may not be possible today, because with a measure of peace and prosperity in Cambodia, tourism at Angkor is growing at a galloping pace. However, I won't even start with "You should've seen it before it was overrun with tourists": people who take that line about formerly remote places always fail to mention that in the good old days the food was inedible, the accommodations squalid, the electricity sporadic, and the roads wretched, and that police guards brazenly shook one down for "cigarette money."

On that visit Russell and I put ourselves up at the Grand Hotel d'Angkor, the only game in town. At the time, the hotel's name was ludicrous: the establishment was certainly grand, in the literal meaning of the French word (our rooms were enormous), but sparely furnished and lavishly mildewed. The Khmer Rouge were still active around Siem Reap, so except for a team of dour Russian engineers, we had the place to ourselves, attended by a staff of twenty gawping adolescent boys who were much more interested in practicing their English than in providing basic services.

The hotel was a sad relic of the golden age of the world traveler, which began early in the twentieth century, when the first great ocean liners made comfortable global travel possible. Romantic destinations such as Bombay and Rangoon became accessible to tourists—and no place in Asia was more exotic than the ruins of Angkor, which nineteenth-century French explorers such as Henri Mouhot and Louis Delaport had described in thrilling journals and depicted in engravings. The existence of venturesome travelers caused luxury hotels to be built throughout Southeast Asia; the Grand Hotel d'Angkor opened in 1932.

When I went back to Angkor recently, I was surprised to see so many tourists, but it didn't seem overcrowded in comparison with other destinations of its magnitude in the region. Anyway, there are certain advantages to a rise in tourism. The Grand had been restored to its original glory by new and highly competent owners, Raffles International, with an excellent kitchen and a beautiful pool and spa. My old room was now luxurious and tastefully decorated in tropical style. The Grand is unquestionably still the premier address here, but it has some competi-

At right, one of the five gates of the walled city of Angkor Thom

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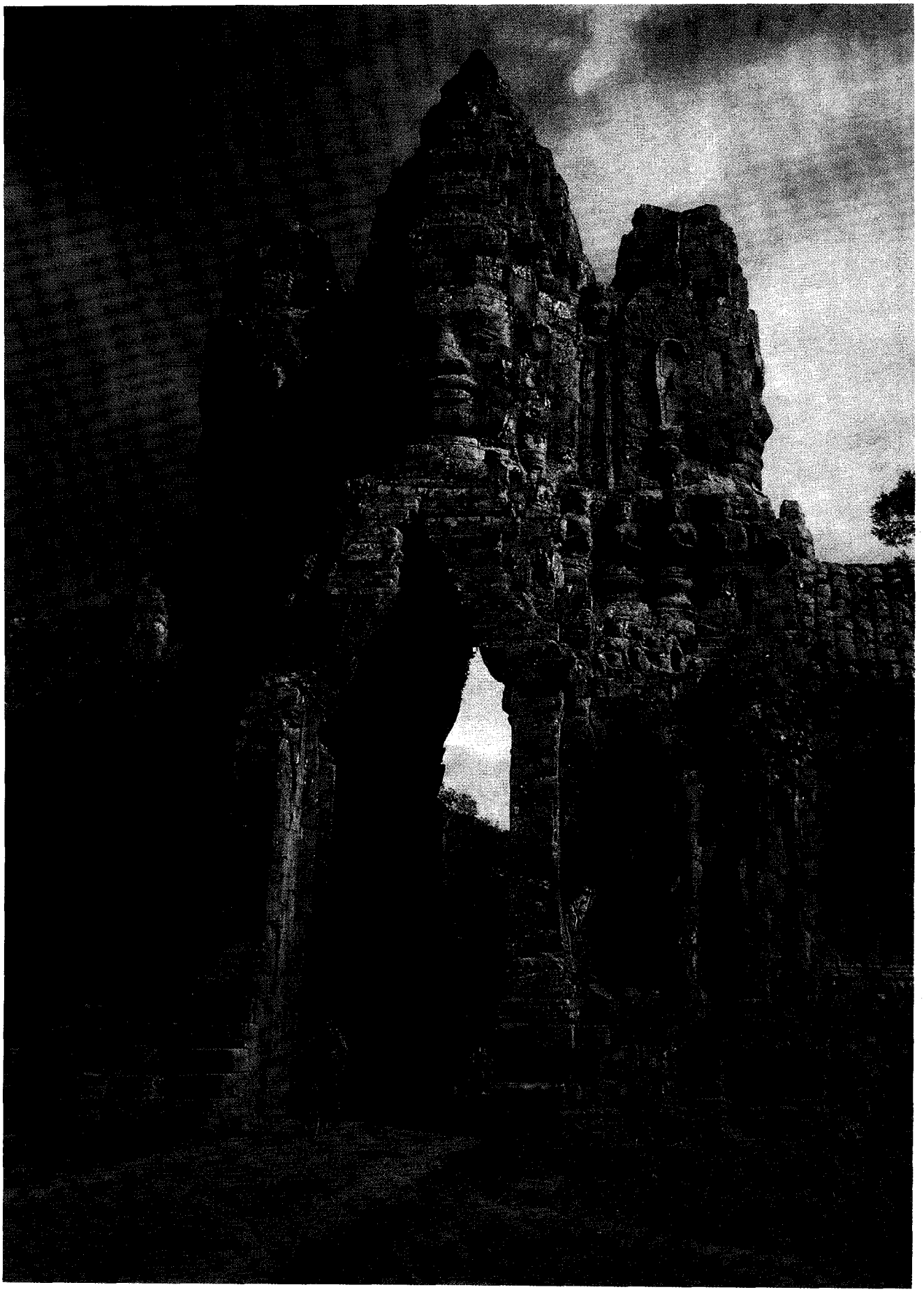

PHOTOS BY JAMIE JAMES

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tion: the French group Accor has opened a swish modern resort-style hotel, the Sofitel Royal Angkor, just down the road, with slightly lower rates. There are many decent budget accommodations; my favorite mid-range hotel is the Ta Prohm, with a pleasant riverside location in "downtown" Siem Reap. For convenience and the best rates, first-time visitors to Cambodia should consider making reservations through a specialized, experienced travel agent such as EastQuest (800-638-3449) or Diethelm, based in Bangkok (e-mail dto@dto.co.th).

Even the most remote monuments of Angkor proper can be reached in less than an hour by car from Siem Reap, but it takes several days to soak up a general impression of the glorious accomplishment of the Khmer. If you want to examine the major monuments carefully, climb a pyramid or two, and see some of the more interesting minor temples, allot five or six days. A visit to Angkor might aptly be compared to a tour of the relics of ancient Egypt, in that the long history of the Khmer produced a wide variety of artistic styles; visitors can go for days without finding a monument that looks just like what they saw yesterday or the day before. (Note that there's almost nothing to do in the evening, apart from visiting outdoor discos: bring books.)

Angkor's most spectacular architectural achievement is Angkor Wat. Occupying a square mile of cleared jungle, surrounded by a wide moat, it is, according to some, the largest stone monument and the largest religious structure in the world. Virtually every inch of the mellow gray sandstone, inside and out, is carved with bas-reliefs—half a mile of them. The most famous relief, depicting a Hindu mythological scene called the "Churning of the Sea of Milk," is a masterpiece of world art, a superbly balanced composition and a carving of exceptionally high quality.

Angkor Wat is so enormous that it's hard to grasp its architectural plan at first. In a rising series of towers and courtyards, it is nothing less than a replica of the Hindu cosmos, culminating in the 213-foot-tall central tower, which symbolizes the mythological Mount Meru, the center of the universe, in the shape of a lotus blossom. No one is sure whether Angkor Wat was designed as a temple or as the tomb of King Suryavarman II, in whose reign it was built (completed circa 1150, it had been under construction for some thirty years); the controversy arises because the entrance is to the west, symbolic of death, whereas nearly all Hindu temples have eastern entrances. It's worth remembering that package tours usually do the Bayon in the morning and Angkor Wat in the evening, for the sunset; reverse the itinerary and you'll find fewer people around.

Just north of the Wat is Angkor Thom, a moated, walled city of nearly four square miles, which was for centuries the Khmer empire's seat of government—both its spiritual center and the site of the King's palace (constructed of wood, this vanished centuries ago). At the main gate are sculptural depictions of fifty-four gods on one side and the same number of demons on the other. Some

Preah Khan temple has for ten years been under restoration by the World Monuments Fund

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of the figures are decapitated, their heads lopped off by looters. The Bayon, at the city's center, is at once the oldest and the most recent of Angkor Thom's relics. The brooding sculptured-stone mountain, occupying the site of a pre-Angkor Buddhist shrine, was the masterpiece of Jayavarman VII, the empire's last great ruler. He's a fascinating character, almost a Khmer version of Ramses II or Napoleon: in 1177, while Jayavarman was living abroad in exile, the Cham, the Khmer's rivals to the east, invaded, burning and plundering the city. Four years later Jayavarman ascended to the throne, repelled the Cham invaders, and took their king hostage. He ruled until he died, in 1219, at the age of ninety-five.

Before his rule the monuments of Angkor were Hindu, but Jayavarman, for reasons that can only be speculated on, converted to Buddhism and embarked on a mad building spree to celebrate his religion (and, of course, his reign), erecting a dozen major monuments in addition to the Bayon. Some of the most beautiful buildings are the temples and monasteries Jayavarman built in the forest, outside the walls of Angkor Thom. The two principal sites are Ta Prohm, a huge monastery dedicated to the cult of Jayavarman's mother, and Preah Khan, similar in design, devoted to his father.

These jungle temples are in a state of hopeless, fabulous disorder, the vines and roots of the luxuriant vegetation intertwining inextricably with the carved stone walls. The first time I visited Preah Khan, it was closed to tourists, so Russell Ciochon and I hired a military escort to take us there. The soldiers hacked away laboriously at the mass of vines to gain access, taking care not to damage the monument. What we found, when we finally entered, was an extensive series of galleries and courtyards, towers and freestanding pavilions, all covered with bas-reliefs of dancers and mystics, lush with lichen, much of it collapsed and at several points almost impassable.

Today Preah Khan is being restored under the supervision of the World Monuments Fund, an independent nonprofit organization, which has wisely decided to stabilize rather than to rebuild, leaving the intricate mass of art and nature more or less as it is. While I was there recently,

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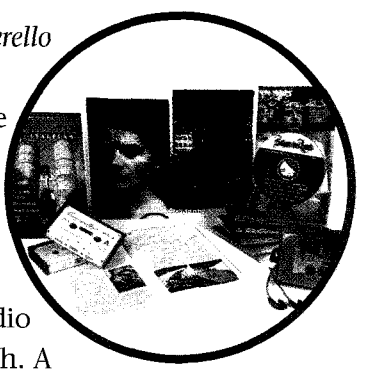

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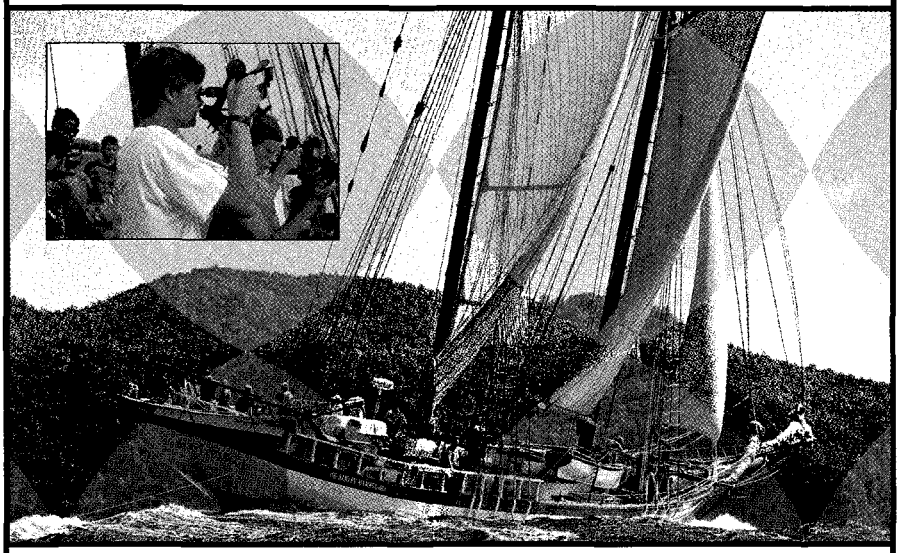

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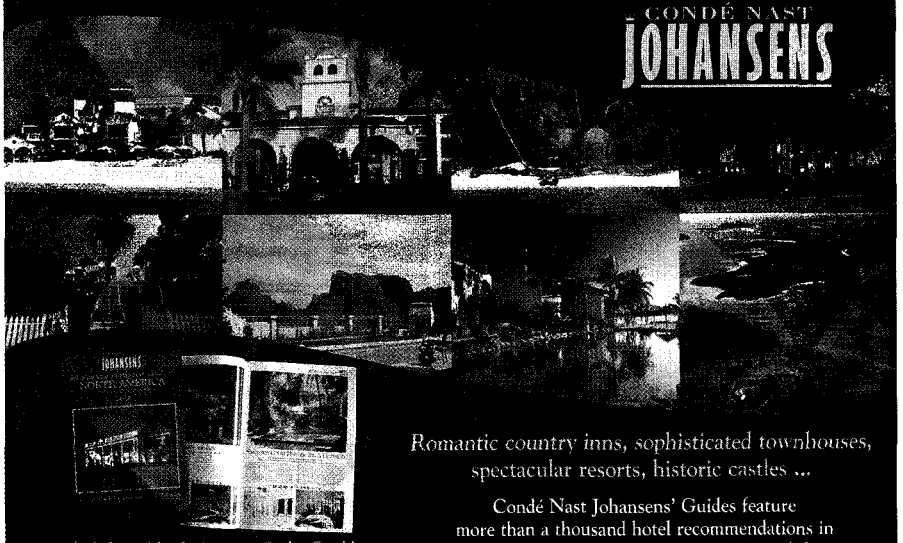

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I met John Sanday, the director of the project, who told me that the WMF, after ten years at Preah Khan, was gradually turning the project over to Cambodian scholars and artisans. Sanday is concerned about the growth of tourism. "Preah Khan is special," he said. "It's still surrounded by forest, a place to discover on one's own, to be quiet and alone. I want to keep it that way."

One never runs out of special places at Angkor. Ask most visitors which monument is their favorite, and they will speak of the magnificence of Angkor Wat and the intensely romantic atmosphere of the Bayon, and then tell you that Banteay Srei is the spot they love most. This tenth-century complex isn't a part of Angkor proper; it stands alone in the jungle about fifteen miles from Angkor Thom. Constructed of a pink, almost crimson sandstone, it has a distinctive style. It's tiny; a short person must stoop to enter the sanctuaries. Its architectural design is perfectly harmonious, the deeply carved bas-reliefs and freestanding sculptures at once elaborate and delicate. Floral and geometric patterns entwine gorgeously with vivid narrative scenes celebrating Shiva, to whom the temple is dedicated.

Banteay Srei was the scene of one of the first and most notorious cases of looting at Angkor, in 1923, when the young André Malraux carried out a major heist, hauling away large sections of the temple to sell. The colonial authorities tracked him down, confiscated the sculptures and returned them to the site, and put France's future Minister of Culture on trial. In his novel *The Royal Way* (1930), which was closely modeled on the incident, Malraux used poetic language to capture the experience of discovery still awaiting visitors to Angkor.

> Before him lay a chaos of fallen stones ... it looked like a mason's yard invaded by the jungle. Here were lengths of wall in slabs of purple sandstone, some carved and others plain, all plumed with pendent ferns. Some bore a red patina, the aftermath of fire. Facing him he saw some bas-reliefs of the best period, marked by Indian influences—he was now close up to them—but very beautiful work; they were grouped round an old shrine, half hidden now behind a breastwork of fallen stones. It cost him an effort to take his eyes off them.

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SPORT

A GENERATION OF GIDGETS

Female surfers are back in the lineup, in droves

BY JEFF SPURRIER

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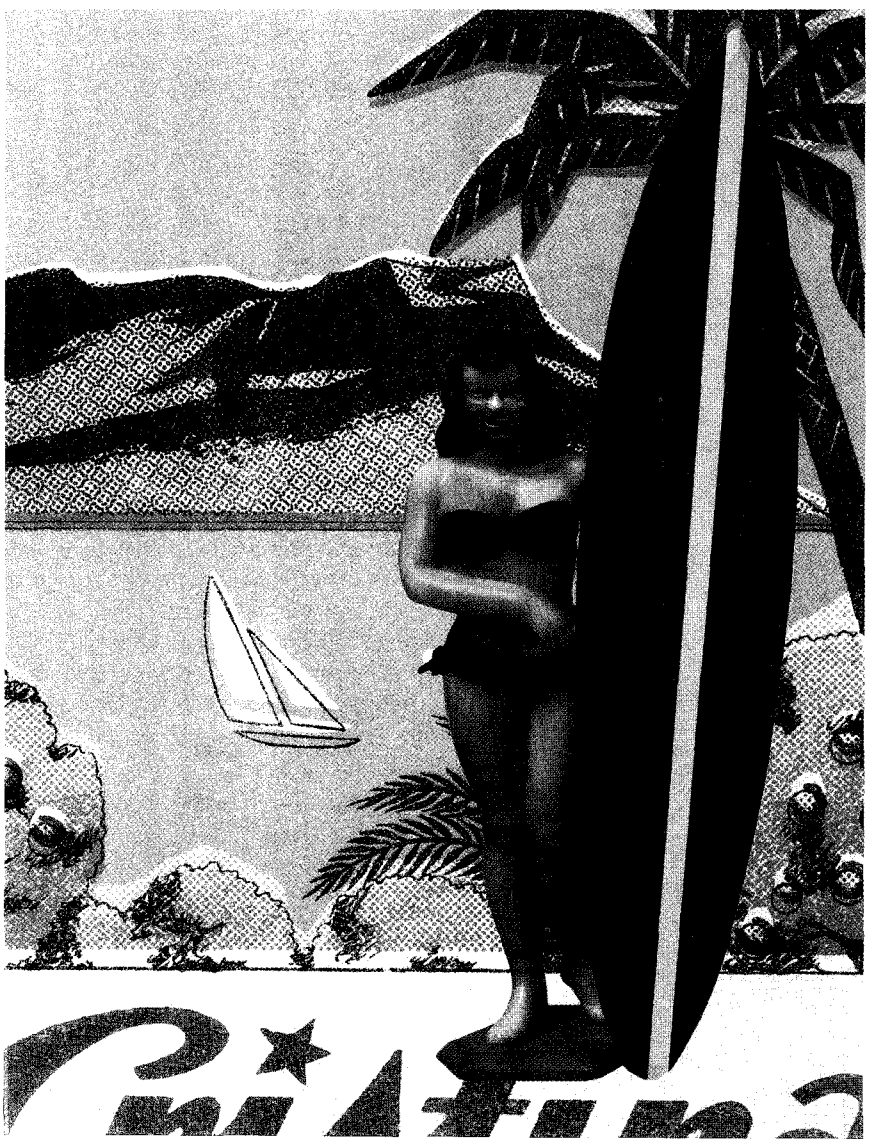
Probably few people remember that in the late 1950s it was a fifteen-year-old girl, Kathy Kohner, who introduced the southern-California surf culture to the American mainstream. Her father, a screenwriter, wrote a quickie novel based on Kathy's stories of a summer she spent surfing at Malibu. The novel was *Gidget*, which sold half a million copies and was spun off by Hollywood into three feature films, three made-for-TV movies, and a TV series. Surfing exploded in popularity. During the 1970s and 1980s teenage boys came to dominate the sport, and demand surged for shorter, faster surfboards—"pocket rockets." What had already become a fairly macho cult became more so.

In the 1980s, at my urging (I wanted company), my wife, Ann, tried surfing. She was starting to get the hang of it when, one morning at Huntington Beach, just south of Los Angeles, a kid on a shortboard dropped in on her as she was taking off. He sprayed her in the face with his wake while yelling "My wave, kook!" Some Huntington Beach locals proudly called themselves Surf Nazis, and Ann did not enjoy getting to know them. She sold her board.

I continued to surf—a bit sadly without Ann. And then, about half a dozen years ago, I noticed the pendulum swinging back the other way. I began to see longboards again, and more and more women in the water. By now Gidget is definitely back in style. Berkley Books has just reissued the forty-five-year-old novel; Francis Ford Coppola is reworking the story as a stage musical—and Kathy Kohner Zuckerman, now sixty-one, has started surfing again. "My husband became sick with Guillain-Barré syndrome, an auto-immune disease," Kohner told me recently. "Getting back in the water was a way to work out my feelings of sadness and helplessness. Catching that Malibu wave again was like a rebirthing, a way to connect with my soul. So much of my life was about Malibu. It was a dream of mine to surf on my sixtieth birthday—and I did."

From the chilly, kelp-filled swells of Santa Cruz's Steamer Lane to the near perfect right-angled waves that wrap around the point at Malibu's Surfrider Beach, female surfers are taking their places in the lineup outside the wave zone. They are lawyers, grocery clerks, grandmothers, single moms, college students with surfing scholarships, pre-teens mixing ballet and shooting-the-curl lessons, Girl Scouts working toward earning the new surfing badge. They're riding boards and wearing wetsuits designed by women for women, taking lessons at all-female surfing schools, going on all-women surfing trips to Mexico and Costa Rica and Indonesia, logging on to the niche Web site wahinemagazine.com; many even subscribed to *Wahine* magazine itself, which was affiliated with the site until the recent economic downturn forced it to suspend publication. A select few are surfing the legendary big-wave breaks, such as Sunset Beach, in Hawaii, and Maverick's, near the town of Half Moon Bay, California. According to some sources, surfing, along with golf, is one of the two fastest-growing sports among women in the United States.

At first it was aging male Baby Boomers who brought the longboard



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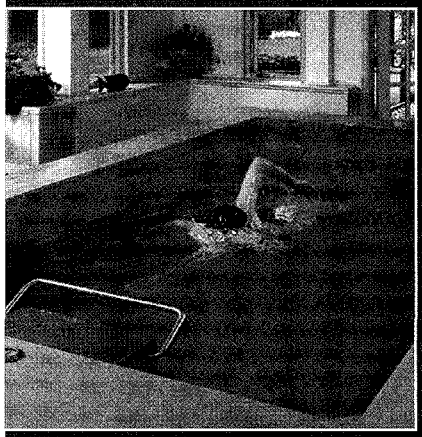

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back, as they found they no longer had the upper-body strength for shortboard surfing. Longboards, measuring eight feet and up, have wide, fat front profiles for nose riding. They are easy to paddle and ideal for small waves, broken or not. Beginners love them, because they are very forgiving when surfers are just learning to stand. Where shortboarders slash the waves to gain maximum speed, longboarders glide and make graceful banking turns, trimming rather than lunging. Although longboards typically cost two to three times as much as shortboards, they now account for nearly two thirds of all board sales. And women, according to various estimates, make up 15 to 25 percent of the current surfing population.

A man couldn't get away with saying this, but surely Elizabeth Glazner, thirty-eight years old, who until January was the editor of *Wahine*, can: longboard surfing is all about grace and beauty and balance, and as such it is the perfect sport for a woman. I interviewed Glazner late last year at the magazine's offices, in Long Beach, California. "Surfing is this gift from feminism, a lifestyle that has allowed the generation of women between bra-burning and Title Nine to rediscover a part of themselves," she told me. "It's at your own pace and meditative. It can be holistic and spiritual. If you have disposable income, you can travel to some of the most exotic places in the world to surf—Costa Rica to Indonesia to Tahiti and Fiji."

During its seven-year run *Wahine* became the bible for female surfers. It presented a unique G-rated blend of soft-pedal feminism, ecology, waterwomen's history, and *Endless Summer* schmaltz, appealing both to mature women surfers and to pre-teens getting their toes on the nose for the first time. Thanks to *Wahine*, a generation of surfers came into the water unaware that "surfing like a girl" could be pejorative.

For example, Sarah Nowland, a twelve-year-old surfer from San Clemente, told me that the boys at her school think it's "cool" that she's on the surfing team. They give her advice and "never say anything mean." She does get cut out of waves sometimes, she added ruefully. "Usually it's older men surfers." Like me.

Early on summer mornings women in wetsuits park their Saabs and Volvos and BMWs just north of the main lifeguard tower at La Jolla Shores, near San Diego. They know the beach here, because it's where many of them learned to surf as students at Surf Diva, a pioneering women-only surfing school. Since Surf Diva began operation, in 1996, it has trained tens of thousands of girls and women, aged six to sixty-eight. The instructors are teachers, nurses, firefighters, paramedics, lawyers, and aspiring pro surfers. The school offers weekend surfing camps throughout the year, with week-long camps during the summer; these are sold out months in advance. Surf Diva also helped to develop the program behind the surfing badge, which the San Diego council of the Girl Scouts began offering in 2000. And for that woman surfer with disposable income it promotes the Las Olas Surf Safari, in a small town about an hour north of Puerto Vallarta, where five days of tropical waves, spa treatments, and surfing lessons runs $1,900 and up.

Izzy Tihanyi, of Surf Diva, is a role model in many ways. The school's founder, she is also a pro surfer—and a size 16. Tihanyi told me, "You can be any size and enjoy the ocean. I feel weightless. It's okay to be a big strong girl and surf."

That message is echoed by twenty-seven-year-old Sarah Gerhardt, the newest recruit to the nation's leading female surfing team, sponsored by the surfwear line Roxy. (In women's surfing circles Roxy is loved almost as fervently as the team it sponsors. It introduced revolutionary trunks-style boardshorts in 1993 and has since grown into a $175-million-a-year line that is the subject of fan Web sites, clubs, and contests.) Gerhardt, who is studying for a doctorate in physical chemistry at the University of California at Santa Cruz, is also one of the most famous female big-wave surfers—the only woman to have "charged" Maverick's. Charging Maverick's, a thirty-foot-plus break, is the surfing equivalent of climbing Mount Everest but without oxygen or Sherpas. During a storm this past November one deepwater buoy measured incoming

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swells of sixty-five feet. Gerhardt, unlike the rest of the Roxy team, doesn't compete or model. She goes to amateur meets to deliver a twofold message: muscles on women are good, and nothing is impossible.

Until Sarah Gerhardt came along, big-wave riding was mainly a male extreme sport. Most of the famous—or would that be notorious?—places to practice it are in Hawaii: Waimea Bay, Sunset Beach, Alligator's, and the outer reefs of Maui and Oahu. These spots are the stomping grounds of contemporary surfing icons such as Ken Bradshaw and Darrick Doerner. Bradshaw himself introduced Gerhardt to power surfing on the north shore of Hawaii, and also shaped her a custom-made series of pointed, front-weighted longboards—"guns," in surfing parlance. In 1999 Gerhardt paddled out and rode Maverick's into surfing history.

Not long ago she told me, "Almost everywhere I went it was 'You stupid chick! Stupid kook! Get out of the water!' I've had that. The bigger the waves got, the less there was of that, because those guys were all on the beach. It was my own little world."

Gerhardt is convinced that it won't be hers alone for long. She told me that it takes about five years to get comfortable surfing and be able to apply one's wave knowledge effectively. That's about the same amount of time the resurgence in women's surfing has been going on. "I think we'll be seeing a lot more women surfing big waves," she said. "Women of all ages are starting to surf now. It's not a fad, not anymore. It's in their blood."

I'm definitely looking forward to about four and a half years from now. Last summer, with hope in my heart, I gave Ann a gift certificate for a lesson from Surf Diva. Two months later, on a warm, windless August morning at Doheny State Beach, she had her first surfing epiphany. I was out in the lineup too that day. I watched as Ann caught an unbroken wave, stood, turned her board, and angled across the face to the shoulder. Still riding the curl and still in control, she caught my eye over the back of the wave. Raising her arms triumphantly, she yelled "Whoo-hooo!!!"

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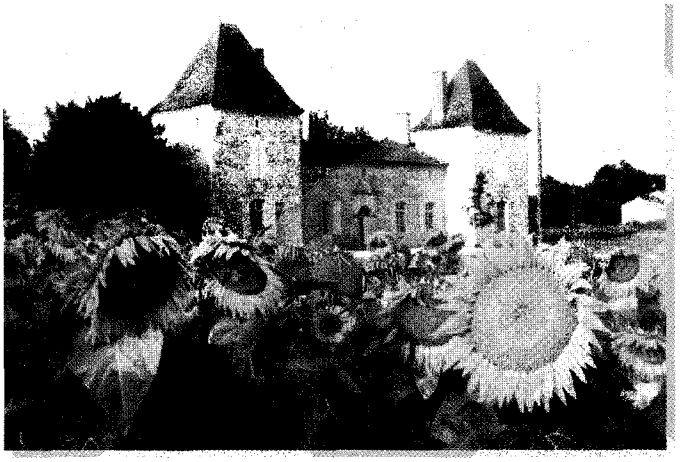

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PALATE AT LARGE

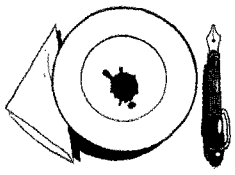
FORE STREET

Restaurants worth building a trip around

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

"What should you order? Open the menu and go 'Eenie, meenie, miney, mo.'" This advice came from my friend and esteemed Boston colleague Sheryl Julian; utterly by chance we had chosen the same frigid evening to drive two hours north to Fore Street, our favorite New England restaurant, for a late-winter lift. She and some Maine friends, whom she had similarly encountered there by chance, were having an after-dinner drink in the bar when my guests and I arrived. We had all been unable to secure a reservation—a sign, in winter, of the restaurant's popularity—and had chosen different ends of the dinner service to avoid a long wait.



PORTLAND
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It is part of the critics' code never to recommend everything; and I imagine that Julian's dinner, like ours, had its share of small flaws. (For the record, she says that it was flawless.) After so many good meals in a place we like so much, both of us go off duty when we step through the door and see the wooden crates of local apples in the vestibule and herbs and vegetables from nearby farms in the glass-walled walk-in refrigerator just beyond it.

Everything at Fore Street is transparent, and was that way even before the term acquired its current vogue-word status (the restaurant opened six years ago). The entire kitchen is visible, with tiered tables and booths on three sides, like the seats in a theater-in-the-round. The back wall is dominated by a wood-fired oven and spits turning over an open hearth. The brick walls, wooden beams, high ceiling, and big windows are original to the warehouse that long occupied the building. The workers enjoyed an unobstructed view of the port and the ferries that ply Casco Bay.

Fore Street is one of many restaurants, shops, and galleries in the handsome brick warehouses of Portland's renovated Old Port, a neighborhood that provides entertaining pre- and post-dinner walks. The latest and happiest addition to the lively and architecturally distinguished downtown is a year-round farmers' market, which, although controversial for its high rents, is beautiful and full of interesting food shops. With luck it will serve—like its Seattle predecessor, Pike Place Market—as a model for the rest of the country.

The chef and owner of Fore Street, Sam Hayward, had much to do with Portland's, and Maine's, current status as the happening New England place to open a restaurant or start an artisan food business—a veritable Bay Area of the East. His first professional cooking experience was in 1974, in a hotel on a small Maine island; after training in the mid-1970s in several classically run New York and New Orleans kitchens, he returned to Maine. Inspired by John McPhee's famous 1979 *New Yorker* article about "Otto," a chef pursuing his personalized-cuisine dream in rural Pennsylvania, Hayward opened a restaurant in the college town of Brunswick in 1981 and looked for farmers and fishermen who could supply his kitchen. In Brunswick, Hayward attracted a devoted following (McPhee even came to dine) but went broke turning out dinners for a too-small restaurant. His following included Julian and me, who discovered in Hayward someone who could do what we most value in a chef: find the best local ingredients and cook them with a minimum of fuss and a sure hand.

Anyone visiting Maine and enjoying Fore Street's view of the port will most likely gravitate toward fish and seafood. Hayward takes care to find, for instance, plump, pristine Pemaquids, to my mind the finest East Coast oysters; sweet diver-caught scallops, delivered straight from the boat and blessedly free of the headache-inducing chemical bath that turns all commercial scallops tooth-enamel white from their natural pearl gray; richly flavored Atlantic smelts; and salmon smoked Scottish-style in the town of Stonington.

But Hayward's heart seems to belong to wood and fire and the flavors they produce. So he makes his masterly fish-and-shellfish stew not just with the usual tomato and fennel but also with fat lardoons of applewood-smoked bacon that he procures from a Vermont butcher and roasts in an open terra-cotta dish in the wood-fired oven. The scallops he grills over applewood from Maine orchards before putting them into (for example) a tart shell with lobster meat and sliced maitake, lately a chef's darling among wild mushrooms, whose flavor is often called lobsterlike. He roasts rope-cultured mussels, raised on a farm nearby, in garlic-almond butter—an odd-sounding combination that ideally suits the moist and gritless but slightly bland mussels.

Hayward's theatrically displayed oven and hearth come into their glory with meat and game—specifically, pork and rabbit. Whole rabbits and pork loins can always be seen turning on one of the spits, the rabbits the size of large roasting chickens. It's a scene from a medieval woodcut, with joints slowly circling and cooks busily working at great square wooden tables. The spit-roasted meats (usually there's chicken, too) have been marinated overnight before being cooked to a turn.

Most desserts, too, are designed to show off the oven; but after a number of Fore Street specialties, another brown dish of mellowed flavors can seem excessive. A clear-tasting sorbet, especially of tart wild blueberries (a leading Maine export) or cranberries, is usually a better conclusion. It seems only fitting to end with a flavor both transparent and local.

Fore Street, 288 Fore Street, Portland, Maine, 207-775-2717. Dinner 5:30–10:00 Monday through Thursday, until 10:30 Friday and Saturday, and until 9:30 Sunday (10:00 during the summer). Reservations and major credit cards accepted.

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JOE CIARDIELLO

MUSIC

CONDUCTING: A BACKWOODS GUIDE

In the intense quiet of a Maine camp aspiring conductors work on bossiness, passivity, and how to move to the music

BY DAVID SCHIFF

.....

In a former life, in the Poland of his ancestors, the conductor Kenneth Kiesler must have been a ruddy, red-bearded rabbi—not a pale Talmudic scholar but a muscular Jew who would cut down the trees to build a wooden synagogue, work miracles with infertile couples, and dance in solitary bliss to the glory of the Creator. In this life Kiesler, who was the musical director of the Illinois Symphony for twenty years, heads the conducting program at the University of Michigan's School of Music. Like most conductors (and like any rabbi), he combines the roles of leader and teacher. Each summer for the past five years Kiesler has run a two-week conductors' retreat at Medomak Camp, on a lake in Washington, Maine. The retreat attracts about forty students, who live either in spartan cabins or in Tibetan yurts and dedicate themselves utterly to music from nine in the morning to ten at night.

Considering how few full-time jobs there are for conductors, it is surprising that conductor training has become a big operation. Conductors' institutes at the Tanglewood and Aspen music festivals attract not only the most promising aspiring conductors but large audiences as well, on the lookout for the next Lenny. Most conductors discover their calling only after they have mastered an instrument, which is why almost all university conducting courses are graduate programs; so conducting students have just a few years in which to move from the rudiments of technique to a career. Conducting workshops condense this phase, immediately putting student maestros before the public; at Medomak (the name rhymes with "the comic") participants ranging in age from sixteen to sixty work on their craft far from the public's gaze—in front of their colleagues (there are no private lessons) and under Kiesler's intense scrutiny. "I'm never nervous when I conduct," one relatively experienced conductor told me. "But here I'm scared to death."

Now in his late forties, Kiesler grew up in the suburbs of New York, the third child of a public school gym teacher and a college professor of geology and geography. When he was eight, he spent his first summer at Medomak Camp. The camp, which closed down in 1980, had been founded in 1904 as a place to teach city boys the all-American values of rural existence. Kiesler returned every summer until he was twenty-one. "Because you were not assigned a daily schedule," he told me on my visit to the retreat, last July, "you learned to take responsibility for yourself. That's why there are no requirements here—participants do as much or as little as they choose." The maximum program is rigorous: classes in movement and ear training in the morning and two lengthy conducting sessions in the afternoon and evening. Midday is left for either the pleasures of the lake or

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preparing for the moment of truth—standing up to conduct.

When I arrived, I was surprised by the quiet. Scattered around the lawn on Adirondack chairs, conductors contemplated music scores either in rapt silence or with headphones plugged into CD players. It seemed like a strange form of practicing. But then again, how do conductors practice? At the piano? In the mirror? In the shower? (All of the above, I learned.) There was no audible music-making. The intense stillness made Medomak feel more like a chess camp than a conservatory.

I met the students at lunch, over fare as spartan as the cabins. A few were uncannily precocious teens, and some were college undergraduates, but many were already in graduate programs, and quite a few were assistant conductors of orchestras or led their own ensembles. There was almost no talk about careers—a second form of surprising silence. But this was a retreat, after all, and everyone seemed relieved to keep the buzz of the music business temporarily out of earshot. Kiesler announced pieces that would be the subject of the day's conducting sessions. He also encouraged students to consider spending a night in the woods alone, in a lean-to near the lake.

The conducting sessions took place in a weathered barn out of Andrew Wyeth. Each student could sign up for ten to twenty minutes of podium time, which included Kiesler's critical interjections. Podium time is recorded with a video camera—a nonrustic touch; students use their tapes diagnostically or edit them down to their finest moments to create auditions for other programs. The retreat had the services of a string quartet (with Kiesler's wife, Emily, on cello), augmented by Bill Grossman—a New York pianist with fifteen years of *Cats* to his credit, who filled in for any missing instruments on an electronic keyboard—and also by a few of the students who played strings. The lack of a full orchestra meant that students could not deal fully with issues of ensemble and intonation and balance. Yet the first session I saw began with the question of how the conductor relates to orchestral players—a problem that expanded and resounded in every session.

The issue of bossiness ran like a leitmotif throughout the afternoon conducting session. Unconscious body language would prevent a conductor from making music with the orchestra. A jutting chin, a punchy left hand, the seeming condescension of peering over eyeglasses—such gestures of authority made the conductor a martinet. "There's no place today for the tyrant conductor," Kiesler told me later, "and there will be even less in the future." A hundred years ago Gustav Mahler could fire a player just for standing up without his permission; now union rules and a democratic ethos prevail. Every student knew that the instrumentalists' respect had to be earned, not commanded, and it could crumble with the slightest sign of technical weakness—another reason to be scared. Kiesler told me that his early career (and his first marriage) foundered on a fear that he might not recognize a mistake right away, thereby revealing an unforgivable lack of omniscience. Players won't tolerate a tyrant conductor, yet they won't respect anything less than a genius. It's a dangerous game, which Kiesler has redefined as a spiritual quest.

Waiting for their turns, the students sat at tables behind the mini-orchestra, watching the conductor as attentively as if they were playing; every conductor was applauded at the end of his or her podium time, no matter how shaky that time had been. Kiesler would start by sitting just to the side of the conductor but would soon be on his feet, either demonstrating how a passage might be conducted or guiding the student's arms from behind like a tennis instructor. "If you are conducting big and nothing happens," he told one student who was waving his arms wildly, "you will start conducting bigger and still nothing will happen—because your beat has nothing to do with the music. When you feel like you are losing control, become smaller, not bigger. If you feel the music, if you *become* the music, you don't need your arms at all. Watch." He led the orchestra through

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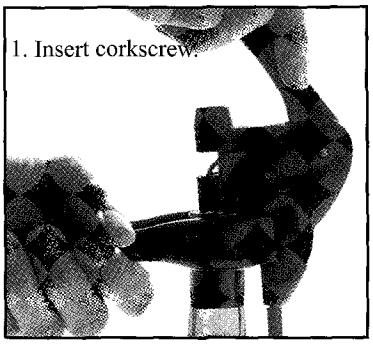

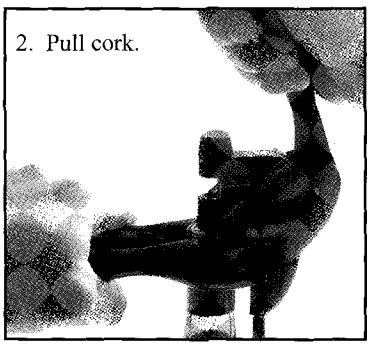

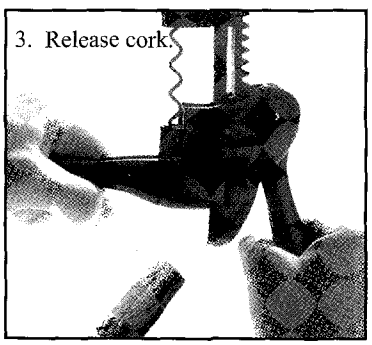

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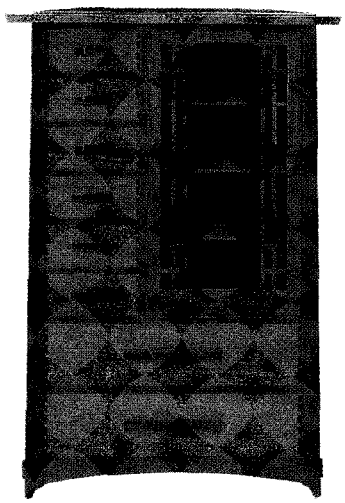

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the passage with only his eyes, head, and shoulders, his face radiating the music's deep soulfulness. His motions were so clear that the players stayed together effortlessly.

It became evident that the ideal role of the conductor lies somewhere between bossiness and passivity. Even enjoying the music has its pitfalls. "You were listening to how beautifully Eva was playing there," Kiesler told one student conducting a section of the monumental Brahms Violin Concerto, with the superb soloist Eva Gruesser. "But you can't do that. If you lose yourself in the music, you can't help the players. They need you." The issue of authority brought out Kiesler's rabbinic side: "Judaism teaches that the highest act you can perform is to set someone up in business—in life—anonymously. That's what you have to do: empower the players to make music without their knowing that you are doing it."

Conductors are dancers whose every little movement has a meaning. The crucial skill they must master is self-choreography based on the score. Many conductors and conducting teachers think of this as a mechanical task. They cling to the prescribed beat pattern (one, down; two, to the left; three, to the right; four, up) without heeding the flow of the music. They scan the score for movement cues: bring in the horns here, cut off the flutes here, raise the volume of the woodwinds while the strings become softer. To help students whose motions have become mechanical, Kiesler has them move their bodies freely in response to different sounds, only gradually introducing actual pieces of music.

At an evening session on *La Bohème*, Kiesler initiated a different kind of score study. Many of the students have never worked with singers before, and have little familiarity with opera. He began by asking the students to draw a curve like a shallow bowl and showing them how different vowel sounds are placed on it: the sounds *ee* and *oo* raise the edges of the curve, whereas *ah* sits at the bottom. This map is often one of the first things that singers learn, but few nonsingers know of its existence. Instrumentalists, he reminded the students, begin study early in life and become used to handling criticism from teachers. Singers usually don't begin study until they are almost twenty, and they are their own instruments. When you criticize a singer, you are attacking him or her personally: you're not just saying that a note is ugly, you're saying, "You have an ugly voice; you're a failure as an artist." A soprano bravely entered the class at this point, singing "*Mi chiamano Mimì*." Kiesler gave a demonstration of singer-talk: Could you add more *ee* to that note? (Translation: You're slightly under pitch.) Could you make this note darker? (Translation: It sounds a bit harsh.) Students could hear the notes find their proper placement. The soprano's voice bloomed.

Opera tests everything a conductor has; it begins on a level of passionate expression at which few instrumental performances ever arrive. In Europe conductors are trained in opera houses, starting as rehearsal pianists. For many Americans the opera house is terra incognita. At a later session devoted to three short, familiar parts of Act I of *La Bohème*, the first student—a massive young man who looked as if he had just stepped off a Wisconsin farm—merely beat time and barely looked at the singers. "You can't conduct opera that way," Kiesler said. "Listen to the music. Look at the singers. Help them." The time-beating continued. Finally Kiesler asked the tenor and the conductor to trade places. The tenor conducted and the conductor croaked "*Che gelida manina*" bravely. He was applauded by his colleagues, who were probably thinking with dread of how they would fare in the same situation. But Kiesler never played the same card twice. Later he asked a similarly nonoperatic student to stand with his back to the orchestra and just listen to the music. "Listen to the joy in Rodolfo's music," he said. "It's so childlike—it's his inner child speaking to Mimì." And to an older student: "You have a grown daughter, right? Mimì is your daughter. Look at her. Help her."

The retreat ended with two "per-

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formances"—the music was finally played without critical interruptions, before a tiny audience of the camp's kitchen staff and some old Medomak people who had known Kiesler when he was a boy. The day before the performances was devoted to a kind of dress rehearsal. Musicians believe that a bad dress augurs a good performance, and perhaps accordingly much of the rehearsal fell apart. For Kiesler it was still a day for teaching, and his criticism became if anything more pointed. A young man began his rehearsal of the opening of the *Firebird Suite* by confidently asking the first violin to retune his E-string for a passage of glissandi overtones, and telling the first horn that a note must be played with the hand in the bell. Kiesler interrupted him: "Okay, you're being the boss. Now turn that off completely and put yourself in the music."

As often happens, things came together at the performances. There were no miracles, but each student demonstrated some kind of growth in skill, in knowledge of the music, in sensitivity to the players. For me the performances brought a change of perspective—literally. All week I had watched the conductors from the vantage point of the orchestra, aware of their facial expressions and body language. Now I sat out with the audience, watching them from behind. Most of what they had learned at the retreat about that infinitely mysterious task of being the music for the players was hidden from view, translated almost completely into sound. Kiesler sat in the audience with his young daughter, emblematically passive. Teaching had yielded performances; the arduous, concentrated soul-shaking of the past two weeks was also invisible, yet it was shaping every sound we heard.

The audience applauded the conductors and the conductors applauded the orchestra and one another—and then it was time for beer and a campfire. The Maine skies had been dark and dripping for most of the week, but now they revealed every star in the Northern Hemisphere. Kiesler, Medomakian to the last, started naming constellations. The teaching continued.

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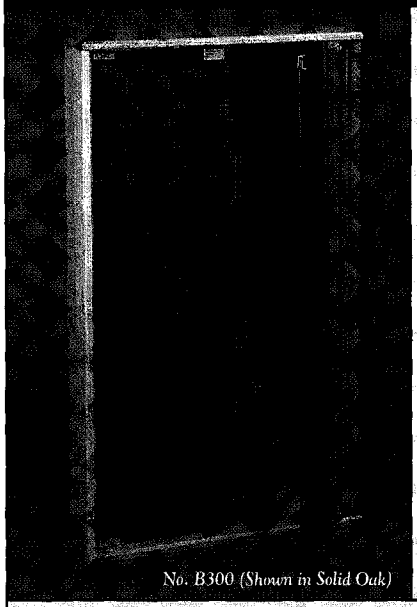

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BOOKS & CRITICS

BOOKS

THE MEDALS OF HIS DEFEATS

Our author takes the Great Man down a peg or two—and still finds that Churchill was a great man

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

In the fateful spring and early summer of 1940 the people of Britain clustered around their wireless sets to hear defiant and uplifting oratory from their new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. On May 13, having just assumed the burden of office from a weak and cowardly Neville Chamberlain, Churchill promised a regime of "blood, toil, tears and sweat." On June 4, after the evacuation of the defeated British army from Dunkirk, he pledged, "We shall fight on the beaches." On June 18 he proclaimed that even if the British Empire were to last for a thousand years, this would be remembered as its "finest hour." Over the course of the ensuing months Britain alone defied the vast conquering appetites of Hitlerism and, though greatly outclassed in the air, repelled the Luftwaffe's assault with a handful of gallant fighter pilots. This chivalric engagement—"The Battle of Britain"—thwarted Nazi schemes for an invasion of the island fortress and was thus a hinge event in the great global conflict we now call World War II.

The foregoing paragraph could appear without much challenge in almost any English or American newspaper or magazine, and versions of it have recently seen print in the reviews of *Churchill: A Biography*, by the British Liberal statesman Lord Jenkins of Hillhead. One might, however, call attention to some later adjustments to this familiar picture.

- The three crucial broadcasts were made not by Churchill but by an actor hired to impersonate him. Norman Shelley, who played Winnie-the-Pooh for the BBC's *Children's Hour*, ventriloquized Churchill for history and fooled millions of listeners. Perhaps Churchill was too much incapacitated by drink to deliver the speeches himself.
- Britain stood alone only if the military and economic support of Canada, Australia, South Africa, India, and the rest of a gigantic empire is omitted. As late as October of 1940, furthermore, the Greeks were continuing to resist on mainland Europe and had inflicted a serious military defeat on Mussolini. Moreover, the attitude of the United States, however ostensibly neutral, was at no time neutralist as between a British versus a German victory.
- The Royal Air Force was never seriously inferior, in either men or machines, to Hermann Göring's Luftwaffe, and at times outgunned it. British pilots were mainly fighting over home territory and, unlike their German opponents, could return straight to duty if they parachuted down. The RAF had the advantage of radar and the further advantage of a key to the Nazi codes. The Royal Navy was by any measure the superior of the Kriegsmarine, and Nazi surface vessels never left port without exposing themselves to extreme hazard.
- The German High Command never got beyond the drawing-board stage of any plan for the invasion of Britain, and the Führer himself was the source of the many postponements and the eventual abandonment of the idea.

A close reading of the increasingly voluminous revisionist literature discloses many further examples of events that one thinks cannot really be true, or cannot be true if the quasi-official or consecrated narrative is to remain regnant. Against which nation was the first British naval attack directed? (Against a non-mobilized French fleet, moored in the ports of North Africa, with the loss of hundreds of French lives.) Which air force was the first to bomb civilians, and in whose capital city? (The RAF, striking the suburbs of Berlin.) Which belligerent nation was the first to violate the neutrality of Europe's noncombatant nations? (The British, by a military occupation of Norway.) But these details, not unlike the navels and genitalia in devotional painting, are figleafed in denial. They cannot exactly be omitted from the broader picture, nor can they be permitted any profane influence on its sanctity. Meanwhile, who made the following broadcast speech to the British people in 1940?

"We are a solid and united nation which would rather go down to ruin than admit the domination of the Nazis ... If the enemy does try to invade this country we will fight him in the air and on the sea; we will fight him on the beaches with every weapon we have. He may manage here and there to make a breakthrough: if he does we will fight him on every road, in every village, and in every house, until he or we are utterly destroyed."

That was Neville Chamberlain, who (albeit in his rather reedy tones) delivered the speech himself. And how many casualties did the RAF suffer during the entire Battle of Britain? A total of 443 pilots, according to official sources cited in Richard Overy's cool and meticulous revisiting of the story.

Winston Churchill, London, June 1945

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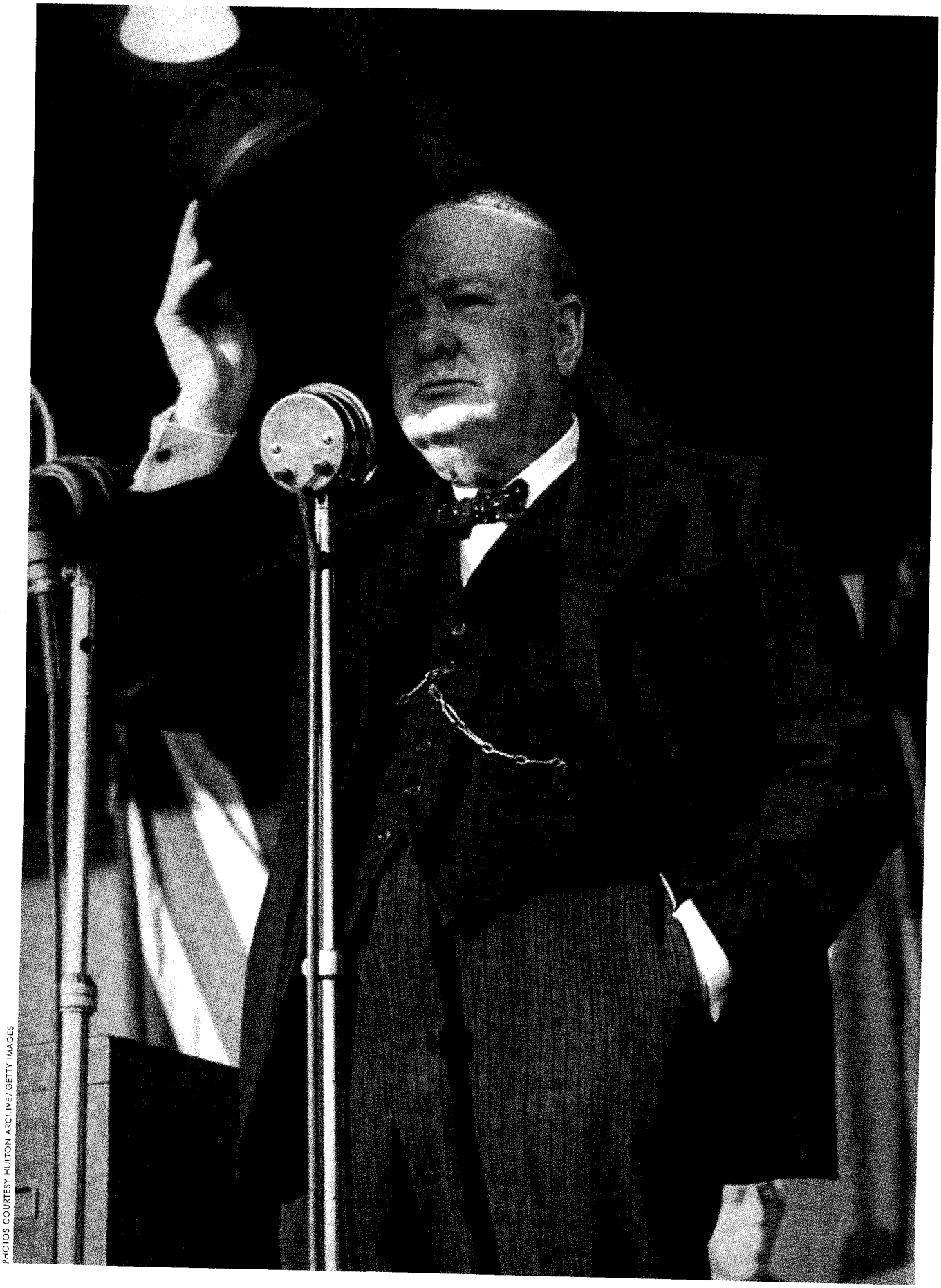

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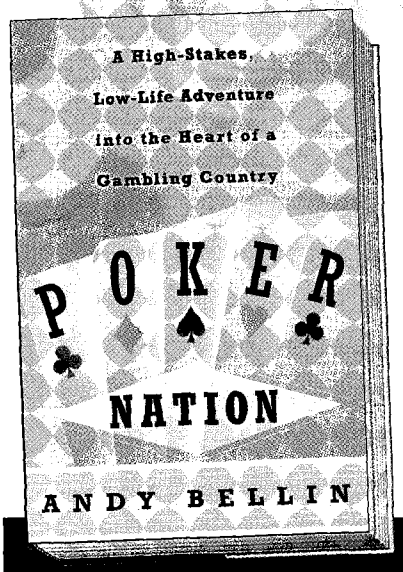

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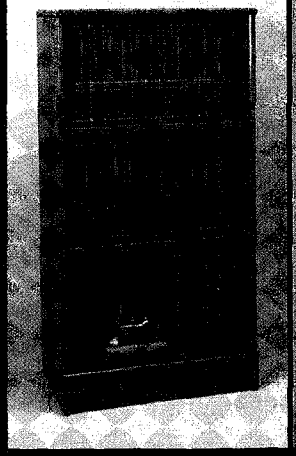

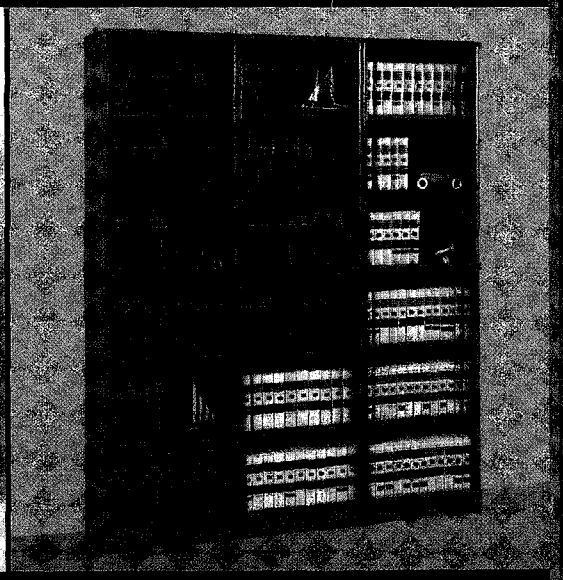

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I was brought up on the cult of Winston Churchill. My father, a Royal Navy commander, was on board H.M.S. *Jamaica* when it helped to deal the coup de grâce to the Nazi warship *Scharnhorst* on December 26, 1943—a more solid day's work than any I have ever done. In the declining post-imperial Britain of the 1950s and 1960s the Homeric story of 1940, and of its bulldog-visaged protagonist, was at once a consolation for many disappointments and an assurance of Britain's continued value to the world. Even then it was sometimes difficult to swallow Churchill whole, as it were. A sort of alternate bookkeeping was undertaken, whereby the huge deficits of his grand story (Gallipoli, the calamitous return to the gold standard, his ruling-class thuggery against the labor movement, his diehard imperialism over India, and his pre-war sympathy for fascism) were kept in a separate column that was sharply ruled off from "The Valiant Years." But even the many defeats and fiascoes and dishonors added in some numinous way to his stature. Here was a man who had taken part in a Victorian cavalry charge at Omdurman, in the Sudan, to avenge the slaying of General Gordon by a messianic mullah, and who had lived to help evolve the design and first use of thermonuclear weaponry. He was not a figure in history so much as a figure *of* history. (Invited by Adlai Stevenson to contribute something to the English-Speaking Union, he gruffly replied, "I *am* an English-speaking union." In anyone else this would have been solipsism, rather than charm commingled with truth.) And because in 1946 he had effectively founded the Anglo-American "special relationship" in its Cold War form, at Fulton, Missouri, his enormous specter seemed to guarantee Britain a continued role as a junior superpower, or at least as a superpower's preferred junior.

In the early 1970s I was working at *The New Statesman*, in London, very near the Public Record Office, when a fresh tranche of Churchill's wartime papers was released. These covered the discussions between Churchill ("Premier," as the official papers called him)

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and Stalin about the future of postwar Eastern Europe. It was already known that Churchill had proposed, on the back of an envelope, a deal with Stalin for 90 percent British control of Greece in exchange for an equivalent communization of the Balkans. But it was not quite clear whether he had also deliberately traded Poland into Stalin's "sphere of influence." The matter had moral as well as historical importance, since it was in defense of Poland that Britain had finally declared war on Hitler, in September of 1939. A.J.P. Taylor prompted me to examine the documents, but the authorities informed me that the entries for Anglo-Soviet discussion of wartime Polish policy had been unaccountably mislaid. That sort of thing happens a lot in a state with an Official Secrets Act, but this was flagrant; and Poland had recently begun to stir and shift again as an actor for itself in European politics. "They always say that when it's important," Taylor told me about the "loss" of the critical records. I briefly considered titling my *New Statesman* article "The Churchill-Stalin Pact" but swiftly appreciated that this would make me look like a crank. There was no Churchill-Stalin Pact. There *could not have been* a Churchill-Stalin Pact. The necessary three words could not be brought into apposition. Heroic and improvised pragmatism—yes. Degraded and cynical statecraft? Not yet thinkable.

The Churchill cult in England, however, is mild and reflective in comparison with the Churchill cult in the United States. (I don't think any British school would be so artless as to emulate the Winston Churchill High School in the upscale D.C. suburb of Potomac, Maryland, which has a yearbook titled *Finest Hours*.) The aftermath of September 11 only reinforced a series of tropes that were already familiar to students of ready-made political rhetoric. "We will not waver, we will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail," President Bush proclaimed as the bombing of Afghanistan began. "We shall not fail or falter; we shall not weaken or tire," Churchill said—somewhat more euphoniously—sixty years before. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has outdone even his Churchill-obsessed predecessor Caspar Weinberger, announcing to the staff of the Pentagon on September 12, "At the height of peril to his own nation, Winston Churchill spoke of their finest hour. Yesterday, America and the cause of human freedom came under attack." Only a week earlier, this time speaking in favor of a missile-defense system, Rumsfeld had informed a Senate committee, "Winston Churchill once said, 'I hope I shall never see the day when the forces of right are deprived of the right of force.'" On September 25, asked whether the Defense Department would be authorized to deceive the press in prosecuting the war, he unhesitatingly responded, "This conjures up Winston Churchill's famous phrase when he said ... sometimes the truth is so precious it must be accompanied by a bodyguard of lies." Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, later to be described as an American Churchill, laid the groundwork for his own plaudits by announcing, just after the aggression of September 11 against his city, that he was reading a book about Churchill's wartime premiership "and nothing is more inspirational than the speeches and reflections of Winston Churchill about how to deal with that." Ronald Reagan hung a portrait of Churchill in the Situation Room of the White House soon after taking power; the first President Bush allowed Jack Kemp to compare him to Churchill during the Gulf War; the second President Bush asked the British embassy in Washington to help furnish him with a bronze bust of Churchill, which now holds pride of place in the Oval Office. The legacy-obsessed Bill Clinton can only whimper at the lack of Churchillian analogy to his own tenure, but the rest of us might wish that if the United States is going to stand for something, it (or its overpaid speechwriting class) would try to come up with some mobilizing rhetoric of its own.

This prevailing line, which teeters between grandeur and kitsch, is followed with reasonable fidelity by American historians and commentators. A few weeks before September 11 a fairly banal development earned a front-page story and an editorial in *The New York*

Books discussed in this essay

CHURCHILL: A BIOGRAPHY
by Roy Jenkins
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001

CHURCHILL: A LIFE
by Martin Gilbert
Henry Holt, 1991

CHURCHILL: A STUDY IN GREATNESS
by Geoffrey Best
Hambledon and London, 2001

THE LAST LION: WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL, 2 VOLS.
by William Manchester
Little, Brown, 1983, 1988

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN
by David Dutton
Oxford University Press, 2001

CHURCHILL'S WAR, VOLUME ONE: THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER
by David Irving
Veritas, 1987

CHURCHILL'S WAR, VOLUME TWO: TRIUMPH IN ADVERSITY
by David Irving
Focal Point, 2001

1940: MYTH AND REALITY
by Clive Ponting
Ivan R. Dee, 1991

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN: THE MYTH AND THE REALITY
by Richard Overy
W. W. Norton, 2001

CHURCHILL: THE END OF GLORY
by John Charmley
Harcourt Brace, 1993

CHURCHILL'S GRAND ALLIANCE: THE ANGLO-AMERICAN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP, 1940–57
by John Charmley
Harcourt Brace, 1995

FIVE DAYS IN LONDON, MAY 1940
by John Lukacs
Yale, 1999

IN OUR TIME: THE CHAMBERLAIN-HITLER COLLUSION
by Clement Leibovitz and Alvin Finkel
Monthly Review Press, 1998

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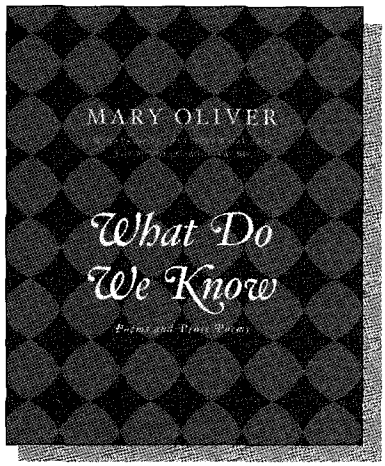

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Times. It became known that William Manchester, debilitated by two strokes, would not be completing his trilogy on the life of Churchill. This trilogy, generically titled *The Last Lion*, had run to two volumes, *Visions of Glory* and *Alone*. If these titles are insufficient to convey the flavor, one might cite, as did *The New York Times* in its editorial, the closing staves of the second and now final book: "And now, in the desperate spring of 1940, with the reins of power at last firm in his grasp, he resolved to lead Britain and her fading empire in one last great struggle worthy of all they had been and meant, to arm the nation, not only with weapons but also with the mace of honor, creating in every English breast a soul beneath the ribs of death."

Never in the field of human biography can metaphor have been more epically mixed. Yet *The New York Times* regarded the lack of a sequel as a cultural event worthy of reverent coverage and a deferential editorial. The latter, unsigned, described the incomplete work as leaving "Churchill somehow suspended, poised in the midst of a great arc whose outcome we know but whose details we would like to savor over again in Mr. Manchester's words." Or, to put it another way, there can never be too much reinforcement of a familiar and useful morality tale. In the quite recent past at least two books have been published to general acclaim—*Churchill: A Study in Greatness*, by Geoffrey Best, and *Five Days in London, May 1940*, by John Lukacs, which assist in this ramming home of an already near unassailable myth. And these, together with Lord Jenkins's tome, only continue a process begun by Churchill himself when he annexed the papers of his time in office to write his own version of events. He could emerge as a historic figure—as he put it in one of his many and likeable moments of self-deprecation—by making sure of writing the history himself. The names of his early research assistants and drafters—Alan Bullock, F. W. Deakin—are testimony in themselves to what might fairly be called a conscription of the historians' professional mainstream. Yet upon reflection one might perhaps decide that the term "conscription" is unfair. "Churchill the historian," said the late Sir J. H. Plumb, "lies at the very heart of all historiography of the Second World War and will always remain there." Donald Cameron Watt commented dryly seven years later, in 1976, "For the bulk of the historical profession in America, Sir Winston Churchill's view of British policy before 1939 has hardly required a moment's critical examination." It would be no insult, then, to describe certain authors not as conscripts but as volunteers.

Manchester's series proposed itself modestly as only the condensed (or large-print) version of the *ur*-text of approved Churchilliana: the eight-volume official biography, by Sir Martin Gilbert, the doyen of Churchill historians. Unlike the grave and measured work of which it is the flickering Platonic shadow, Manchester's unfinished labor is overwrought in the sentimental, parahistorical Camelot style that its author helped to originate. Once again, action is judged by reputation rather than reputation by action. In an extraordinary gesture Manchester rendered Churchill's wartime speeches as blank verse, with carefully incised line breaks and verse settings. This was to make explicit what had been latent heretofore, and it was also to pay Churchill the compliment he would probably have most valued and desired. (Remember that he received his 1953 Nobel Prize for literature.) In the English-speaking world, at any rate, his lapidary phrases and rolling flourishes have achieved the familiarity and renown enjoyed by some passages of the King James Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, and the "kingship" plays of William Shakespeare. These excerpts or verses have the peculiar and potent faculty of recurring to our minds in time of trouble or when they seem relevant or poignant (or simply useful). And they are associated above all with fortitude, staunchness, and stoicism, salted with a little gallows humor. Imperishability of that sort descends on human beings very rarely indeed. And the audience does not mind a little exaggeration if the aim is flattering to the groundlings. "After he had spo-

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ken to them in the summer of 1940 as no one has ever before or since," Isaiah Berlin wrote in this magazine, in one of his many courageous stands for the conventional wisdom, "they conceived a new idea of themselves which their own prowess and the admiration of the world has since established as a heroic image in the history of mankind." How true. In bidding a gracious farewell to Neville Chamberlain, Churchill nobly called him "the packhorse in our great affairs." Accepting the compliment, Chamberlain pointed out that the line comes from *Richard III* and not, as Churchill had alleged, from *Henry VI*. But no matter. The thing is not to be right about Shakespeare. The thing is *to be Shakespearean*. Blood, toil, tears, sweat—and some immodest populism.

In the flush of the "finest hour" in 1944 Laurence Olivier produced and starred in his patriotic movie version of *Henry V*. This film constituted (and still constitutes) subliminal propaganda of a high order. Shakespeare, Saint George, and the Almighty are yoked together against minatory Continental power. Some deference to contemporaneous Gallic sensibilities resulted in a downplaying of the original quarrel over the Salic law and the French throne, and the scene at Agincourt involving the ruthless massacre of all Prince Hal's civilian and military prisoners was thoughtfully excised. Indeed, who today cares about the true foundation of Henry's opportunistic claim, or about the heaps of dead on both sides, or the eventual ruin of his plan for the mainland? What is this when set beside the marvelous evocation of the Feast of Crispin, or the five-to-one numerical odds against the English at Agincourt ("we few, we happy few"), or the splendid words in which the terms of surrender are twice refused by Harry, or the glorious and seductive notion that sacrifice and wounds are to be envied and that "gentlemen in England, now a-bed / Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here"?

These very words were muttered by living (and dying) men on the shores of Dunkirk and Dieppe and Normandy, along with the whispered accompaniment that those absent would "hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks / That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day." And for at least a generation after World War II they had a stilling effect on all politicians who had apparently temporized about the last—or, indeed, the next—European conflict. In a secondhand form they exist in our vernacular as taunts about "Munich" or "appeasement," the Munich analogy having extended itself through the "Iron Curtain" address in Fulton as a reproach to all those who were soft on communism. Manhood was the least of it; the taint of treason lay behind the suggestion of a want of virility.

World War II poster, circa 1942

In his time Churchill was very "soft," as well as very hard, on both fascism and communism. His protean, volatile character has allowed him to escape most of the moral and political consequences. So it must count as a minor irony of history that his reputation and rhetoric, both of them highly

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serviceable to conservatives, have come under sustained attack from a determined school of British right-wing historians—for the intelligible reason that the salient grievance of these historians is the loss of the British Empire. Nevertheless, some American circles retain anti-Churchill suspicions, because of Churchill's lifetime role in embroiling the United States in European wars. And beneath all this is a more utilitarian critique that simply inquires whether World War II could or should—because of its appalling cost—have been averted.

I earlier employed the term "profane," knowing that I should be in need of it again. The argument about World War II and its worthwhileness is the most apparently settled and decided of all major questions in our culture. There may be an occasional flinch (about the obliteration of Dresden, say, or the incineration of Nagasaki, or the wisdom of demanding unconditional surrender). But the evidence adduced at Nuremberg has the effect of retrospectively annulling all such doubts. Even the standby argument of some anti-Churchill Tories (and others, including George Orwell), about the callous collusion between Churchill and Stalin, seems almost anachronistic in view of the eventual implosion of the Soviet system. Finally, nostalgia for the British Empire is not so strong either in Britain or in its former colonial possessions as to evoke much rancor or regret at the loss of dominion.

Churchill and his right-wing critics, from John Charmley to David Irving, have something in common. They unite around the two propositions that communism was to be opposed and British imperialism was to be upheld. For the first few decades of his political career Churchill was happy to be counted an extremist—if not, indeed, a fanatic—on both these counts. He helped to organize the brutal, abortive invasion of Lenin's Russia in 1918, and published at least one subsequent article blaming the Jews for Bolshevism. He also wrote and spoke until quite late in the day (though more as an anti-Communist than an anti-Semite) in favor of Mussolini, Franco, and even Hitler. His fundamentalism about India, and the racist language in which he opposed the smallest concession to the Indian independence movement, were among the many reasons for the wide distrust that hampered him in the 1930s, and for his exclusion from the Tory Cabinets of that decade. Thus we face an intriguing question when we ask ourselves how it was that he came to embrace a cause that not only transcended those two elemental commitments but eventually negated them.

The hagiographer and the hatchet man are in unspoken agreement here. William Manchester and David Irving lay considerable stress on the near eclipse that overtook Churchill in the mid-1930s. The consensus politics of the so-called National Government had no appeal for him, and no need for him either. He was popularly (and correctly) regarded as one of those whose calamitous earlier policies had made coalition and compromise so necessary. And he was further distrusted as one who was predisposed toward grand-opera or militaristic solutions. Already in his sixth decade, Churchill was also (as some have a tendency to forget) on the verge of bankruptcy. Locust years indeed, in which Churchill ("so surfeit-swell'd, so old, and so profane ...") was more Falstaff than Hal. The blunt conclusion, encouraged by a reading of Manchester no less than of Irving, is that the Last Lion needed a last hurrah—a campaign issue that allowed him scope for all his talents and energies.

Confronted by the enemy's herald, who warns him that he faces annihilation if he brings his sick and shabby force onto the field of battle, King Henry V retorts with pugnacity but without overmuch bravado: "We would not seek a battle as we are / Nor, as we are, we say; we will not shun it." This was not unlike the wager that Churchill made in his campaign against the Baldwin and Chamberlain governments in the late 1930s. He accused them of being militarily unready while simultaneously urging them to risk battle. The contradiction is forgiven in light of eventual triumph, as it was in the case of Agincourt. But the political underlay was epigrammatically understood by Churchill as early as 1934. Writing about the reactionary press baron Lord Rothermere, who was enthusiastically pro-Nazi *and* pro-empire, he said, "He wants us to be very strongly armed & frightfully obsequious at the same time." The left, he added with equal acuity, wanted Britain to remain "disarmed & exceedingly abusive." The central paradox of the epoch has never been better phrased. We are almost conditioned to forget that many of the anti-Churchill Tories were busily committed to rearmament, but regarded Churchill's constant drumming on the subject as vulgar and alarmist (as, indeed, it sometimes was).

The historian David Dutton seeks to rehabilitate Chamberlain and to write about Churchill as if he were, at last, approachable as a mere mortal. But in doing so he understates the way in which the Tory establishment of the time was subjectively, as well as objectively, pro-Nazi.

> On closer examination the image of Churchill as the resolute and unwavering opponent of the 1930s' dictators—a reasonable basis from which to launch an assault upon Neville Chamberlain—begins to dissolve. His contemporary criticism of the aggression of totalitarian regimes *other than Hitler's Germany* was at best muted. When Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 Churchill declared that there would be a general unwillingness to fight or to "make any special exertions in defence of the present government of China." Similarly, his record over Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War failed in reality to place him in a distinctly different camp from Chamberlain and the National Government. Nor did Churchill rush to denounce the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935. As late as 1937 he even seemed willing to give Hitler the possible benefit of the doubt. Accepting that history was full of examples of men who had risen to power by "wicked and even frightful methods" but who had gone on to become great figures, enriching the "story of mankind", he held out the possibility that "so it may be with Hitler" ... Before 1938 his most significantly outspoken criticism of government policy related to its failure to uphold Baldwin's pledge to maintain air parity with Germany. The government, how-

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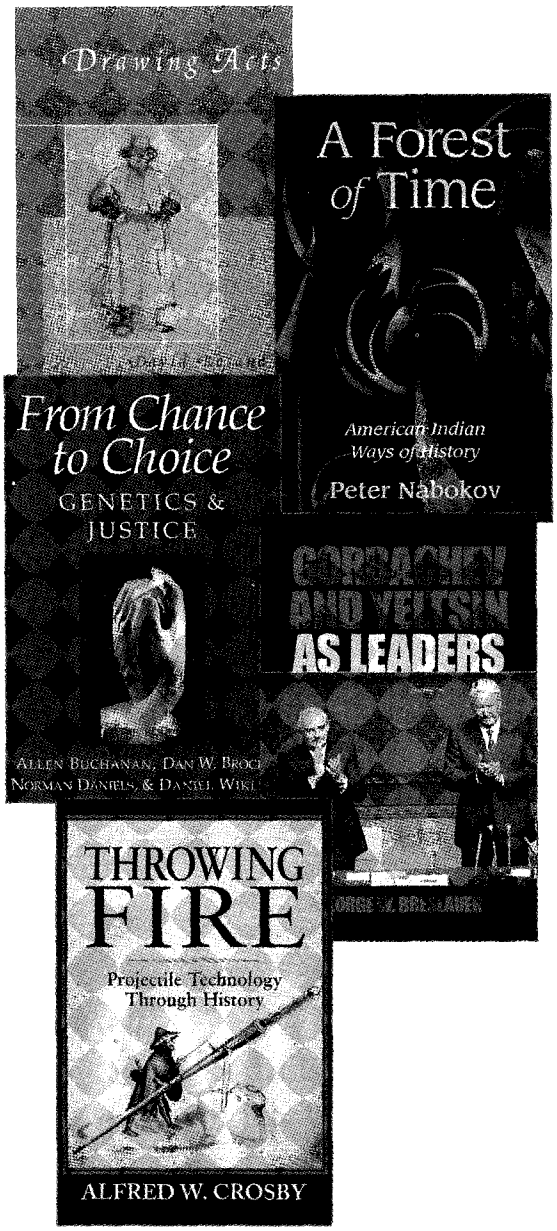

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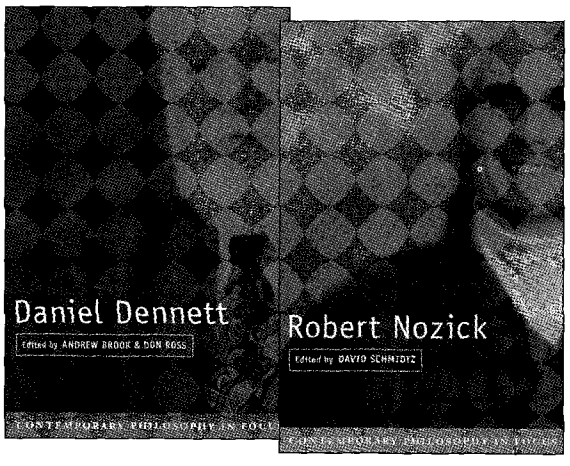

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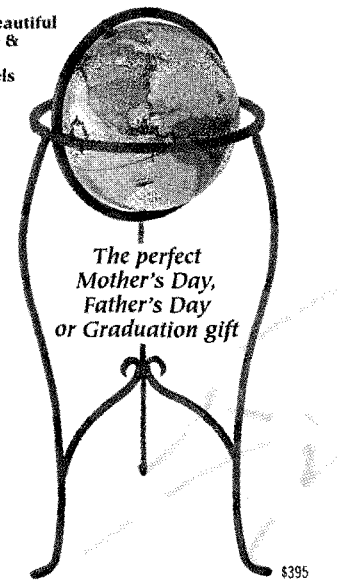
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ever, had come to admit its failure in this respect and to begin to increase the pace of rearmament. [Italics added]

This is true enough in the formal sense. But one might as readily have summarized Lincoln's hesitations and evasions on the matter of slavery and abolition, and his long and tortuous attempts to avoid war, and his preference for the survival of the Union over other questions of principle. Yet when the arrogant exorbitance of "The Slave Power" compelled a confrontation, there was no length to which Lincoln would not go; no abolitionist group, however fanatical, that he would not befriend; and no extremity of pitiless violence to which he would not resort. His gift—better to say his instinct—for unifying and spirited phrasing promoted him well above the sordid battlefields for which those phrases were carpentered. Churchill (who in his writings actually betrayed a sympathy for the Confederacy) strikes me as a politician of that kind—a statesman who could use terms like "destiny" and "the Almighty" without seeming self-conscious; a Hegelian figure capable of entirely fusing himself with what he conceived as a fateful hour. In his contradictions he contained multitudes.

The word "appeasement" obscures some elements of this realization now, as it did then. It was the vague term chosen by the Tories themselves to mask a collaboration with fascism and also their candid hope that the ambitions of Hitler could be directed eastward against Stalin. It is as easy to imagine the RAF helping the Wehrmacht in the Caucasus—had things occurred in a slightly different order—as it was difficult for my gruff, reactionary Royal Navy father to find himself, under Churchill's orders, running guns to Stalin via Murmansk. In their neglected book *In Our Time: The Chamberlain-Hitler Collusion* (to which I should confess I wrote the introduction), Clement Leibovitz and Alvin Finkel deploy an arsenal of documents to argue that sympathy for the Nazi Party prevailed in the highest British circles even after the declaration of war in September of 1939. It wasn't at all that the British rightists were vacillating and pacifistic—an absurd notion to begin with. It was that they thought they could save their empire by a tactical alliance with Berlin. One simple proof of this can be adduced: British colonial and naval officials were historically very jealous of their country's predominance in the Mediterranean, which extended from the Strait of Gibraltar to the shores of Palestine. Mussolini's maritime challenge to this hegemony was vastly strengthened by Franco's advance in Spain, and British ships visiting Republican ports were actually sunk by Italian planes and submarines during the Spanish Civil War. Yet the cheers for Franco on the Tory benches never died away. Quite obviously, these people thought they saw in fascism a future ally and not a future rival.

Thus Professor Dutton is ungenerous to Churchill. He partly acknowledges as much, in the small concession above on the threat from Germany, which was qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from that posed by Italy or Spain or even—Churchill's greatest failure of prescience—Japan. But he omits to credit the *way* in which Churchill broke from his previous sympathy for fascism and the "appeasement" of it, and also the stern, memorable words he employed to make the breach. It was actually the realization about Britain's position in the Mediterranean, and not any sympathy for Republican Spain, that impelled him to recant his long-standing support for the Franco side. But when he made the switch, he made it wholeheartedly. The British ambassador in Paris did not especially object to Churchill's inviting Léon Blum to dinner during his unofficial stopovers (the leader of the Front Populaire was also an honored guest at Churchill's own country house at Chartwell). But he did put his foot down when Churchill asked him to produce some French Communist guests. Writing to a colleague about "The Focus," that loose-knit group of politicians and journalists and socialites that informally coordinated anti-appeasement information and activity in the late 1930s, Churchill once described it as a coalition seeking support

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especially from "those of the 'left.'" As a back-bencher with no official position, he repeatedly invited Stalin's ambassador, Ivan Maisky, to his home to discuss political strategy.

It is difficult to exaggerate the difference between this and all his previous stances. And so it is indeed strange, given the heavy emphasis placed by chroniclers on Churchill's sheer magnitude of personality, that the ingredient of pure ambition should be so much ignored or even disallowed. Churchill knew he had but one chance to put himself at the head of affairs. He was more than willing to amend or abandon all his previous allegiances in order to do so. To take only one example, Churchill had rashly enlisted on the side of King Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson against Stanley Baldwin. He made such a fool of himself in the process (even Lord Jenkins concedes urbanely that he must have been hopelessly drunk at the crucial moment) as to jeopardize his newfound anti-Nazi connections. Yet only a short while later he jettisoned all his romantic and high-flown nonsense about being "a King's man" and rejected the absurd former monarch as if he, Churchill, were Hal and the King the cast-off jester. Rereading this record, and surveying the ever multiplying fund of fresh sources, we find ourselves reviewing the career of a vaulting prince of opportunists.

Churchill wrote and spoke until quite late in the day in favor of Mussolini, Franco, and even Hitler. He opposed the smallest concession to the Indian independence movement in racist language.

Here one must negotiate the toxic figure of David Irving. If Sir Martin Gilbert's work is the quarry from which the wagons of orthodoxy continue to trundle away, laden with the building blocks for lesser edifices of loyalism, then Irving's projected trilogy *Churchill's War* is the dynamite that lies still unexploded around the quarry. Two volumes have so far been published, bringing the story up to 1943, with the Battle of Kursk balanced by the impending invasion of Sicily. Since his first volume was published, to some acclaim, in 1987, Irving has been reduced to publishing and marketing his books himself. The reason for this is now well understood. Both in his public life as a fringe speechmaker and in his career as a freelance archivist and historian, Irving has tainted himself with the one thing of which no serious person can even be suspected: a sympathy for the Nazi cause. Much of this taint is the consequence of an unsuccessful libel lawsuit against the Holocaust specialist Deborah Lipstadt.

Anyone who reads his first two Churchill volumes with open eyes will see at once that Irving invites, if not enjoys, his reputation as an untouchable. Whenever he mentions Nazi defectors or mutineers or anti-Hitler plotters (and the frigid reception given to such men by Chamberlain and Lord Halifax was yet another clue to their real sympathy for the Führer), he refers to them as "traitors." He repeatedly describes Churchill as a front man for "the Socialists" and for (variously) "the Zionists" and "the Jews." He has an unconcealed contempt for mongrel America, and for the wiles of Roosevelt as he schemed to poach the wonderful British Empire. Yet in the text Irving often refers to Churchill as "Winston." (Irving, as those who study him will know, has a tendency to mix the oleaginous with the aggressive.) About halfway through Volume One, describing the tit-for-tat raids by which, he maintains, Hitler was first induced by Churchill to bomb London in September of 1940, he summarizes his essential position.

> This first attack had killed 306 Londoners. It was the first lurch towards the holocaust. Now Churchill and Portal needed no further justification

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Churchill visits the air base at Kenley, April 1939

for what they proposed—to unleash a new kind of war, in which ultimately one million civilians in Germany as well as hundreds of thousands of French, Poles, Czechs and others would die under the trample of the Allied strategic bomber forces.

("Holocaust" literally means a devouring by fire, so the term may be technically allowed, but you see what I mean.) Irving has a great facility for innuendo; its most successful application is the repeated suggestion that Churchill used his foreknowledge of German air raids sheerly for grandstanding purposes. On the nights when he knew that Göring's bombers would overfly London on their way to, say, Coventry, he would make a point of standing on the Air Ministry roof, or of taking a stroll in the Downing Street garden, thus impressing his staff and subordinates with his pluck and daring and sangfroid. On the nights when Enigma gave him private information about a raid on London itself, he would decamp to the country house of a wealthy friend. This accumulation of detail is so subversive of the legend as to make a greater difference in the mind of the reader than many more-serious shortcomings of generalship. The allegation has now been in print for fifteen years, and I have never seen it addressed by the Great Man's defenders, let alone rebutted.

So visceral is his contempt for Churchill that even the later revisionist historians handle Irving with tongs. Clive Ponting's study *1940: Myth and Reality*, published in 1991, does not acknowledge Irving's existence except in the bibliography. John Charmley's first book on Churchill, *Churchill: The End of Glory*, was published in 1993 (while Charmley held the chair at, of all places, Fulton, Missouri), and his second book, *Churchill's Grand Alliance*, appeared in 1995. The name David Irving is only briefly cited in either text or index. (This method is employed in turn by Lord Jenkins, who awards Charmley a single reference *en passant*, doesn't even credit Irving in his bibliography, and in general writes as if all "second thoughts" about Churchill are beneath his, and our, notice.) Yet internal evidence strongly suggests that Ponting, Charmley, *and* Jenkins have read Irving with keen attention, and have used him to enlarge their narratives without appearing to bow to his influence.

I would not consider as qualified in the argument about Churchill anybody who had not read Irving's work. In those pages one may read, without the veil of discretion or constraint that descended like a thick velvet curtain after 1945, what Churchill's colleagues and subordinates really thought about him at the time. What they often thought—ambassadors, private secretaries, generals, air marshals—was that he was a demagogue, a bluffer, an incompetent, and an inebriate. Some of those cited are jealous subordinates, and others are military men with a pre-war sympathy for fascism. But here, for instance, is Lord Hankey, one of the leading professional civil servants during both world wars, writing in May of 1941, when he had the job of coordinating Britain's secret services:

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Churchill has great gifts of leadership, and can put his stuff over the people, Parliament, his Cabinet colleagues and even himself. But he is not what he thinks himself, a great master of the art of war. Up to now he has never brought off any great military enterprise. However defensible they may have been, Antwerp, Gallipoli and the expedition to help the White Russians at the end of the last war were all failures. He made some frightful errors of judgment between the two wars in military matters, e.g. obstructing the construction of new ships in 1925 ... his false estimates of the value of French generals & French military methods ... It was he who forced us into the Norwegian affair which failed; the Greek affair which failed; and the Cretan affair which is failing.

All of this, and more, is true. Yet even as the disaster in Crete was becoming evident, and Churchill was wondering how to break the news of another calamity, the Nazi flagship *Bismarck* was found in the North Sea (with the help of an "unofficial" American spotter plane), disabled by a hastily dropped torpedo, and sunk. Triumph. If Churchill was a Hegelian figure, and if Hegel described Bonaparte as "history on horseback," then Churchill is the most exemplary illustration of one of Bonaparte's maxims about generalship: he was lucky. The Norwegian fiasco—a fiasco of his own making—led to the vote of confidence in Parliament that deposed Neville Chamberlain. The defeat of France, which negated Churchill's dogmatic and dangerous belief in the efficacy of the Maginot Line and the Maginot mentality, allowed him to launch an enormous domestic "unity" campaign that stilled his critics and neutralized his rivals. The sudden frightening indebtedness and impoverishment of Britain gave him room to be sole mediator with Roosevelt, who agreed for a price to be his banker and armorer. At almost every point Churchill was allowed by events to flaunt the medals of his defeats.

There were times when this was not so, but they have been airbrushed from the received record. Not only did Churchill entirely lack foresight (or even ordinary prudence) about the ambitions of Japan, but in the early

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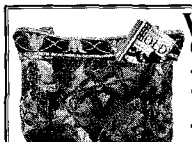
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days of his prime ministership he gave orders for the closure of the Burma Road, the supply route by which Nationalist China had received the means of resistance. This was an overt capitulation to Hirohito's demands—an abject act of "appeasement" and one that was, interestingly enough, opposed as such by none other than the now despised Lord Halifax. Yet when, not long afterward, Singapore was encircled by the Japanese, Churchill raged incoherently about the failure of his generals to warn him of the threat, spoke terrifyingly of the need to uphold "our country and our race," and gave the direct order "There must at this stage be no thought of saving the troops or sparing the population ... Commanders and senior officers should die with their troops." Read out of context, this hysterical directive could have been a telegram to either commander in the Battle for Stalingrad. It was discreetly countermanded by Archibald Wavell, who permitted the odious General Percival to capitulate. (The story of this outburst is rendered no prettier by the fact that Churchill was hoping, in his own words, to impress the Americans by a great human sacrifice.) Lord Jenkins, I must confess, surprised me, in only one way: he freely admits Churchill's continual worry that the British soldiers were not as good, or as worthy of his militancy, as the soldiers of the other side. This insecurity about the unworthiness of the rank and file for great deeds or great sacrifices was of course shared by at least two of the other three wartime overlords.

It is indeed strange, given the heavy emphasis placed by chroniclers on Churchill's sheer magnitude of personality, that the ingredient of pure ambition should be so much ignored or even disallowed.

Scouring the increasingly meticulous and assertive and well-sourced revisionist literature, I felt a sensation I had experienced only once before, while reading Josephine Tey's minor masterpiece, *The Daughter of Time*. As fellow addicts of this book will know, it begins with an acceptance of the standard view of Richard III—"Crookback Dick," the usurper, and the murderer of the Little Princes. Then, by slow forensic degrees, it demonstrates that every aspect of this story is an accumulation of lies and later courtier propaganda. The chronicle of Holinshed, the memoir of Sir Thomas More, the drama of Shakespeare himself—all are pitilessly uncovered as the merest conjury and fraud. Even for a reader who has no stake in Tudor spin-doctoring, the effect is a vertiginous one, with all the cargo in the hold slowly turning over. Is one to be left with no illusions? Is the whole pageant a cruel put-up job?

There is an increasing scholarly understanding that only when Hitler made the mistake of fighting the Soviet Union and the United States simultaneously did he condemn himself to certain defeat. The overall British contribution to that defeat has been diminished by the years and with the unsealing of more and more international archives. Yet the legend of 1940 has persisted, and has survived the opening of even the British archives on the period. A sort of cognitive dissonance is in operation. The records show, for example, that in secret Cabinet discussions that spring and summer Churchill more than once favored limited negotiations with Hitler, while Chamberlain at least once voted against them. Nobody in the government was in favor of surrender; nobody, including Churchill, was in favor of rejecting all negotiation with Hitler on principle. But some, including Churchill, were too much committed to a war to turn back without risking ridicule or obloquy.

For an instance of the tenacity of the traditional view, by which one historian underwrites and reinforces the conventional efforts of another, I cite this ex-

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cerpt from John Lukacs's November 2001 review of Geoffrey Best's *Churchill: A Study in Greatness*:

> One of the stunning phrases in Churchill's history of World War I is his description of the First Fleet leaving Portsmouth for Scapa Flow on July 28, 1914, through the English Channel: "Scores of gigantic castles of steel wending their way across the misty, shining sea, like giants bowed in anxious thought." Best ends his book with Churchill's funeral, on January 30, 1965, "the great cranes along the south side of the stretch of the river between Tower Bridge and London Bridge, dipping their masts in tribute as [Churchill's funeral launch] went by, 'like giants bowed in anxious thought.'" This is the mark of a great historian.

It is by no means the mark of a great historian. It is the mark of a recycler of familiar rhetorical themes, and of stale rhetorical expressions ("wending their way") at that. But Lukacs is committed to this style in precisely the way he is committed to its corresponding substance, which admits of no demurral. Just as it's easy to shock someone whose knowledge of World War II comes from the movie *Casablanca* by mentioning the obstinate fact that the Roosevelt Administration recognized Vichy even while it was at war with Germany, or the equally obstinate fact that it never declared war on Hitler but waited for Hitler to declare war on the United States, so it is easy to upset the Lukacsian world view with a couple of incontrovertible observations: In 1940 the Churchill government did not even surrender the Channel Islands. It evacuated them, beaches and all, and permitted an unopposed Nazi occupation. Churchill himself was quite ready to discuss Hitler's demand for some German colonies in Africa if that would help to buy time, and even contemplated the cession of some British colonies, such as Malta and Gibraltar.

Indeed, it is fascinating to notice how often the colonial "periphery" was deemed the essential theater for avoiding an all-out war between Europeans. Chamberlain had cared far more about India (a much more faraway country) than about Czechoslovakia, whereas

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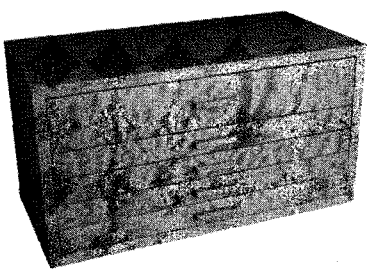

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Churchill was willing to use imperial outposts as bargaining chips with both Roosevelt and Hitler; and in dealings with Washington the British were forced to mortgage what they actually held—in the Caribbean especially—as a down payment on Lend-Lease. It seems almost unbelievable now that the British should have panicked at the "prospect" of a Nazi invasion of Ireland, but it remains the case that Churchill (who had helped to fix the Partition of Ireland in 1921) offered to hand over Protestant Ulster to Eamon De Valera in exchange for the use of Irish ports. Hoping to preserve good relations with food-producing Argentina, the British considered relinquishing their dubious historical claim to the Falkland Islands.

Nor is this colonial dimension a sidebar to the main event. If anyone were to write a serious book about the moment when Britain and Churchill crossed the Rubicon and convinced those at home and abroad that there was no alternative to a war to the finish, the relevant time would not be the days of equivocation in May of 1940. It would be July 3 of the same year, when the order was given to destroy the French fleet in the port of Mers el-Kébir, or Oran, in Algeria. Having vastly and repeatedly overstated the will and the ability of the French to resist Hitler, and having nearly lost an entire British army on this delusion at Dunkirk, Churchill became his own polar opposite and decided that the surviving French naval force was in imminent danger of being grafted onto the German fleet. As it happened, Franklin Roosevelt and Cordell Hull were expressing precisely the same anxiety, at exactly the same time, about the *British* fleet. In none too delicate a fashion they suggested that Churchill dispatch the Royal Navy across the Atlantic for safekeeping. As late as June 27 Hull had proposed this very course, before being checked by an indignant reply from Churchill.

It can confidently be asserted, based on numerous records and recollections, that the British bombardment of the French navy put an end to this period of vacillation. In Parliament, Churchill's earlier and more famous speeches (which he did at least give in the chamber, leaving Norman Shelley to handle the airwaves) had been greeted by the Tory members with sullenness or sarcasm—with what one Minister described at the time as a "sinister" lack of enthusiasm. But the news from Mers el-Kébir precipitated the first real ovation of his stewardship as Prime Minister. It was also employed by him to rub in a very salient point: "I leave the judgment of our action, with confidence, to Parliament. I leave it also to the nation, and I leave it to the United States. I leave it to the world and to history." There was to be no more talk of compromise: "We shall on the contrary prosecute the war with the utmost vigor by all the means that are open to us until the righteous purposes for which we entered upon it have been fulfilled. This is no time for doubts or weakness. It is the supreme hour to which we have been called."

"Supreme hour" is just as effective as "finest hour," but this is one speech that has not come down to us by way of the Churchill school of historians. Why not? After all, it rallied opinion, spat defiance, dissolved factional differences, and mightily impressed both Washington and Moscow. It was also an unarguable act of war rather than an act of verbiage. It was a burning of the boats. Ah, but the boats were French. And so were the many hundreds of those who died in them. Moreover, no evidence has ever been produced to suggest that the French would have given over their fleet to the Nazis, and there is much evidence the other way: the ships had been moved to North Africa in the first place to avoid their impressment by Germany, and no surviving Vichy vessel was ever transferred to German control. The British commander who was ordered to open fire on a fleet that lay at anchor—Admiral James Somerville—confessed himself nauseated by the task. The French never forgave the incident. Chroniclers prefer to skate over it or, where possible, elide it altogether.

Yet here, if you will, is the Shakespearean or biblical element at work again. If Churchill would so cheerfully

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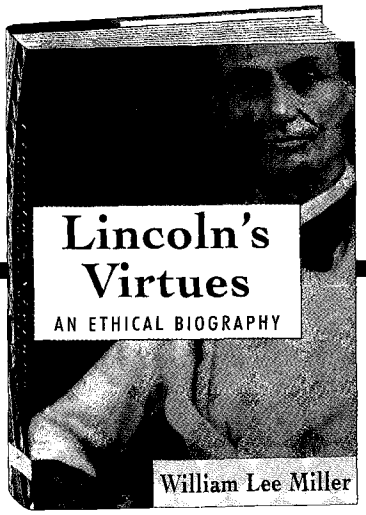
slay and humiliate his recent ally, as an earnest of his ruthlessness and resolution, then what might he not do? This was a much more literally and vividly "Churchillian" moment than most. It's just not—if I may put it like this—the sort of thing they teach you in school.

At the end of his almost parodically orthodox book Geoffrey Best asks himself why Lyndon Johnson did not attend Churchill's funeral, in 1965, and decides to leave this wounding question as an open one, almost incapable of rational explanation. Well, Churchill very pointedly did not attend Franklin Roosevelt's obsequies in 1945, and even Lord Jenkins allows one to speculate—in view of Churchill's addiction to Atlantic crossings and White House hospitality—that this was determined by pique, including pique at Roosevelt's repeated refusal to visit Britain during the war. Several years ago I read through the entire Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence and was astonished to find how much the two men had disliked and distrusted each other. Astonished, too, by the clarity and candor of this mutual disaffection, and by the way that official history, most notably Churchill's own volumes, downplayed the fact. The resentment on Roosevelt's side was rather petty: he did not forget being snubbed by Churchill at their first meeting, in 1918; did not care for his endless importunacy; and was often appalled by his alcoholism. For Churchill's part there was the detestation that is often felt by the mendicant; he hated having to be polite to the man he was asking for a loan. And to this was added the humiliation of the terms: Roosevelt always exacted payment, in gold or in bases, in advance, and was once described by his victim as "a sheriff collecting the last assets of a helpless debtor."

One might feel more sympathy for this complaint if Churchill had not employed precisely the same lofty and arrogant method with his own mendicants. The French and the Poles, much more injured in their pride and in their territory than the British (and this often as a result of listening to British promises), were bluntly and sometimes thuggishly told to know their place and to keep their mouths shut. One does not have to reopen the tattered conspiracy theory about the death of General Sikorski. But it is morally impossible to read Churchill's brutal injunction to Sikorski—that he drop the subject of the Soviet massacre of the Polish officer corps at Katyn—without reflecting that many more deaths were much more cynically covered up. (No serious British official doubted the truth or the justice of Sikorski's complaint, though Churchill continued to smokescreen the issue even in his memoirs.)

Roosevelt did not forget being snubbed by Churchill at their first meeting, did not care for his endless importunacy, and was often appalled by his alcoholism. Churchill felt the detestation of the mendicant.

Roosevelt's case was slightly different. He was determined not to repeat the Wilsonian mistake of involving America in secret diplomacy; he was fighting the last war. But then, so was Churchill in his way. The issue foremost in Churchill's mind was the entanglement of the United States in the combat. He and his admirals regularly joked about the happy possibility that the German navy would provoke a confrontation with an American vessel in the North Atlantic. During the hunt for the *Bismarck* and its consort, *Prinz Eugen*, Churchill announced that "it would be better for instance that she should be located by a US ship as this might tempt her to fire on that ship, then providing the incident for which the US government would be so grateful." He may have been too jaunty about the second part of the hypothesis. But the evident reference was to the notorious sinking of the *Lusitania*, in 1915,



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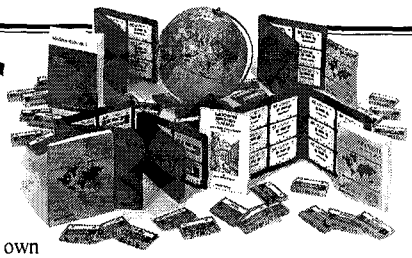

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Down. 1. SPECS (double def.) 2. LA + THING 3. CRA(C)KLE (*a clerk* anag.) 4. E(ARNE'S)T 5. R(EAR)END 6. EASED (anag.) 7. CHI + NO (*on* rev.) 8. T(IE)UP (*put* rev.) 9. S + TORIES 15. SHIV + A 17. VIE + WS 19. C + ARTERS (*arrest* anag.) 20. S + PRIEST 21. WRINKLE (anag.) 22. LE(THE)AN 23. FAR + MING 26. VIDEO (hidden) 27. (r)OSIER 28. PI(L)ES 26. LINGO (anag.)

which occurred during his first tenure at the British Admiralty. The official historian of British Naval Intelligence, Patrick Beesly, has already written about this as follows:

> For my part, unless and until fresh information comes to light, I am reluctantly driven to the conclusion that there *was* a conspiracy deliberately to put the *Lusitania* at risk in the hope that even an abortive attack on her would bring the United States into war. Such a conspiracy could not have been put into effect without Winston Churchill's express permission and approval.

Those who like to refer to Churchill as an adventurer or a swashbuckler or a buccaneer do not like to hear their words come back to them in this fashion; the Beesly history is invariably omitted from the authorized version. But I venture the prediction that the next wave of Churchill revisionism will focus more and more acutely on this and similar incidents. If he has a titanic place in history, it is largely because he was instrumental in engaging the United States in two world wars, and thus acted as (inadvertent) midwife to the successor role of America as an imperial power. The disagreeable and surreptitious element of this story cannot indefinitely remain unexamined. (There is more than a hint in some recent work that the paranoid American right may be mistaken in its ancient belief that "FDR knew" about the imminence of Pearl Harbor. FDR probably did not know. But Churchill quite possibly did.) At any rate, Churchill got his wish, for a wholehearted American commitment to the war. But in exchange he had to sign a virtual British "Declaration of Dependence," on everything from currency to colonies.

Churchill's role in advancing the career and power of Joseph Stalin is the second guarantee of his enduring historical importance. In many of his communications and confidences one gets the distinct sense that he admired the great despot not in spite of his cruelty and absolutism but because of it. (He told Ivan Maisky of his admiration for Stalin's annihilation of the Trotskyists. And that was before

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Churchill at a fleet review by King George VI, May 1937

the outbreak of war.) Thus, when he mounted the podium at Fulton and spoke of an "Iron Curtain" extending from the Baltic to the Adriatic, Churchill at least possessed the authority of someone who had done much to bring that curtain down. In his other character, as Anglo-American imperialist, he had also helped to determine Washington's role as guarantor of the other side of the curtain. Finally, he had helped to share the atomic secret as partial payment for a permanent seat for Britain at all superpower negotiations. A colossus by any measurement, if not the part avuncular and part growling figure depicted by those who trade in reassurance.

It is truth, in the old saying, that is "the daughter of time," and the lapse of half a century has not left us many of our illusions. Churchill tried and failed to preserve one empire. He failed to preserve his own empire, but succeeded in aggrandizing two much larger ones. He seems to have used crisis after crisis as an excuse to extend his own power. His petulant refusal to relinquish the leadership was the despair of postwar British Conservatives; in my opinion this refusal had to do with his yearning to accomplish something that "history" had so far denied him—the winning of a democratic election. His declining years in retirement were a protracted, distended humiliation of celebrity-seeking and gross overindulgence.

Some recent work on Hitler, notably by Ian Kershaw, has disclosed a banal but nonetheless awful thought: The Führer always "knew" that he did not have long to live. He embarked on rash or hectic or suicidal enterprises not because he believed that his Reich would last a thousand years but because he sensed that it would not. (Those of his intimates who came to realize this were in possession of one of the most ghastly insights in human history.) Even without this awareness no actuary would have insured Hitler's life for an extra decade, or even five years. In retrospect this terrible knowledge might seem to vindicate the appeasers and those who, like pre-1941 Roosevelt, were ready to wait and see. A holding operation, or a compromise, could have perhaps resulted in Hitlerism's giving way to a successor regime or possibly being overthrown in favor of one. The Final Solution, which did not begin until the night and fog of war obscured it, might have been averted or at least attenuated. Millions of other Europeans and Americans might not have been burned or starved or tortured to death. We might not be living under the minute-by-minute menace of nuclear extinction.

I can think such thoughts, and even adduce evidence for them, and feel all

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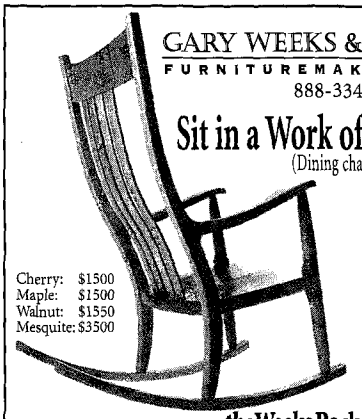

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the cargo in my hold slowly turning over until there is no weight or balance left in the once sturdy old vessel. Stephen Jay Gould, reviewing the evidence of the fossil record in the Burgess Shale, offered the dizzying conclusion that if the "tape" of evolution could be rewound and run again, it would not "come out" the same way. I am quite sure that he is correct in this. But history really begins where evolution ends, and where we gain at least a modicum of control over our own narrative. I find that I cannot rerun the tape of 1940, for example, and make it come out, or wish it to come out, any other way. This is for one purely subjective reason: I don't care about the loss of the British Empire, and feel that the United States did Britain—but not itself—a large favor by helping to dispossess the British of their colonies. But alone among his contemporaries, Churchill did not denounce the Nazi empire merely as a threat, actual or potential, to the British one. Nor did he speak of it as a depraved but possibly useful ally. He excoriated it as a wicked and nihilistic thing. That appears facile now, but was exceedingly uncommon then. In what was perhaps his best ever speech, delivered to the Commons five days after the Munich agreement, on October 5, 1938, Churchill gave voice to the idea that even a "peace-loving" coexistence with Hitler had something rotten about it. "What I find unendurable is the sense of our country falling into the power, into the orbit and influence of Nazi Germany, and of our existence becoming dependent upon their good will or pleasure." Those who write mournfully today about the loss of the British Empire must perforce admit that the Tory majority of 1938 proposed to preserve that empire on just those terms. Some saving intuition prompted Churchill to recognize, and to name out loud, the pornographic and catastrophically destructive nature of the foe. Only this redeeming x factor justifies all the rest—the paradoxes and inconsistencies, to be sure, and even the hypocrisy. But then his last political initiative, and his final excuse for declining to make way for a successor, was in 1953–1954, when he reversed course and proposed a major summit with Stalin's heirs to try to avert a Cold War. That was, in light of his past, paradoxical and inconsistent and hypocritical also. Yet it hurts to read of the contempt and condescension with which Dwight Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles treated this greathearted effort. Even Best and Jenkins are ruefully at one on this episode. For those then in power the Churchill legend was quite satisfactory as it was, with the instrumental metaphors of Munich and Dunkirk and Fulton always at hand.

Earlier I mentioned the stand of the Greeks in 1940. On October 28 of that year, having received an ultimatum from Mussolini to capitulate or face immediate occupation, they responded with the single word "*Ochi*"—"No!"—and mounted an extraordinary resistance that at first drove the forces of Italian fascism well back into Albania. The day is a national holiday in Greece, and "*Ochi*" can be seen cut into the side of more than one Greek mountain. When the Nazis joined Italy to punish this intransigence, and exerted overwhelming force, a Greek editor wrote an imperishable front-page article saying that Greece, which had once taught men how to live, would now show them how to die. There was much brave mention of Thermopylae and Marathon. It's a good and an inspiring story. However, and in fact, Greece at the time was ruled by a particularly crude homegrown Fascist dictator named Ioannis Metaxas. He almost certainly never uttered the pungent word "*Ochi*,"—replying, rather, to a demarche from the Italian ambassador by saying "*Enfin—c'est la guerre*." The relatively brief Greek holdout led eventually to appalling reprisals and a cruel famine, and made very little difference to the outcome of the war. (Though it is an article of belief among many Greeks that the savagely protracted defense of the island of Crete, invaded from the air where once Daedalus and Icarus had soared, delayed the start of Operation Barbarossa and thus contributed to Hitler's fatal collision with the Russian winter.) The story's ending is distinctly inglorious, with Winston

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Churchill arriving in liberated Athens in 1944 and ordering the British General Scobie to treat the Red-dominated population as if he were in a conquered city (and meanwhile trading Greece itself with Stalin).

Yet would one want to be without that story of Greek defiance, even if it proved illusory, or the defiance futile? People fight, as Kant and Hegel and Nietzsche have emphasized, for dignity and for "recognition" just as much as for their "real" interests. Cold and detached revision has removed the aura of heroism from many luminous and legendary events, including the storming of the Bastille, the fall of the Winter Palace, and the publication of the Emancipation Proclamation. Yet new tales arise continually to replace the exploded ones. We seem to have a need, as a species, for something noble and lofty. The task of criticism could be defined as the civilizing of this need—the appreciation of true decency and heroism as against coercive race legends and blood myths. The application of this winnowing and discriminating process to the Churchill cult is more urgent and more relevant—and more feasible—than any reconsideration of Agincourt or Thermopylae. In common with these epics, though, it will be found to have survived in its Platonic essence, quite independent of any evidence or testimony. On the wall of the folkish cave it retains a refracted light and life of its own. Satirizing the too much hymned Greek war against the Emperor Darius, Robert Graves once wrote a poem called "The Persian Version," which reduced Marathon to its proper proportion as a fleeting skirmish on an imperial periphery (and, by doing so, slyly and implicitly reinstated it in its impossible glory). Graves's work helped us to see that the antique gods and emperors were mere mammals like ourselves. And it is another of his titles, this time a modern one, that furnishes the necessary condition for future Churchill scholarship. In order to begin at all, we need at last to say good-bye to all that.

BOOKS

A MAGNIFICENT MISFIT

Lorna Sage rejected empty romanticizing in favor of complex truth

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

.....

With this memoir rich in dark humor and vivid prose, Lorna Sage—who at the time of her death last year, just two days short of her fifty-eighth birthday, was one of Britain's most admired women of letters—charts her bookish girlhood in a disorderly family centered in a place of "changeless order": post–World War II Hanmer, Wales. Although most of the rural town's inhabitants knew their place and expected to stay there, Sage was a misfit in a family of misfits, much to her eventual advantage in the wider world. Reading Sage's account of her eccentric family—the grandmother who subsists on tea cakes and unstinting hatred of her husband; the mother who reverts to girlishness when her husband returns from the war, forgetting how to ride a bike and celebrating her ineptitude as a housewife; and the father whose "characteristic tone of voice was a sort of self-righteous yell"—is like listening to a friend whose stories about her family's nuttiness will always top yours. She can amuse us with this material in part because she writes as if she kept her distance from all of them, with the exception of her depressive and womanizing grandfather, the vicar of Hanmer's Anglican church, who imbued her with the "taste for words" that in large part determined the course of her life.

Sage reveals her own eccentricities with pride. She spent a good part of her girlhood wandering the countryside,

BAD BLOOD
by Lorna Sage
William Morrow
288 pages, $24.95

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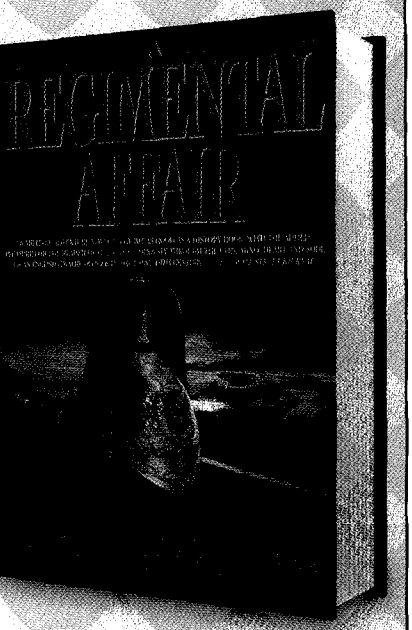

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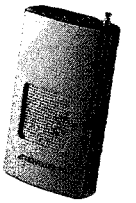

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"addicted to the glum pleasures of plodding about alone." And she claims she never slept after the age of nine. Owing to sinus problems that kept her awake, she got a doctor's permission to read all night; anyone who grew up constantly reading will recognize and relish her account of hiding in books and building "a kind of nest out of any old scraps of print," and also the self-consciousness and the sense of "sleep-walking" in public that tend to accompany a proclivity to live inside one's head. Having spent her formative years in the "secret slum" of the vicarage, which "turned in on itself" away from the public square and in which "the bits no one could see" were "nearly never" washed, Sage was enamored of dark corners and creepy stories. (Her family, whose members preferred to go their separate ways, was relieved to move from a council house with an "open-plan" living room to an Edwardian villa "with lots of solidly separate rooms.") But she also wanted to be "out": she craved friends, developed a typical teenage girl's interest in boys, and longed for a career. Boys and homework were supposed to be mutually exclusive, but as an insomniac, Sage writes, she had time for both. Still, the physical world remained fuzzier for Sage than her mental one. So sure was she from her reading that sex would be a "momentous" experience that she was surprised at sixteen to realize, by discovering she was pregnant (with her daughter, Sharon), that she must indeed have "gone all the way."

Although her experience of the conflicting emotions of childhood and adolescence may be nearly universal, Sage eschews shorthand and cliché, and so rejects whining and empty romanticizing in favor of complex truth. Hanmer was "a most picturesque place from a certain distance, but close up its substance was heavy and strange," a mud whose pull at her feet she savored, both literally and figuratively. A part of her longed to be truly a creature of Hanmer, "fully occupied going nearly nowhere," instead of having to make up her life as she went along. She adored her grandfather but admits that had he lived long enough, he

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would surely have betrayed her "as he had all the others." At her first dance she hoped in the usual teenage fashion for a "cavalier," but ended up monopolized instead by "distracted, disjointed and clammy" Victor Sage. And though he would soon become her confidante, lover, and husband, he would never be Mr. Darcy.

She credits a girlfriend with the ability to make meaningful stories out of seemingly mundane events (she could "caress shapeless moments ... until they wriggled into life and sucked your fingers"), but that gift in fact belonged equally to Sage. Her confiding style is casual, but her observations probe deeply into familial relationships, the social forces of postwar Britain, and, most of all, her own developing awareness of her desires and talents. This memoir captures both a type—a book-loving girl of the 1950s, with the disadvantages of her gender and rural upbringing, who will make a brilliant career for herself—and an intensely strange, scrappy, and winning individual.

BOOKS

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

Irish contentment and Irish misery; Robert Cohen's "formidable comic energy"; a much-hyped "immature fictional excursion"

.....

BY THE LAKE
by John McGahern
Knopf, 352 pages
$24.00

The Irish writer John McGahern's sixth novel stands in marked contrast to its predecessor, *Amongst Women* (1990), a prize-winning portrait of intransigent age. Joe and Kate Ruttledge keep a bit of livestock on their property alongside a small lake, but they don't depend on farming—which only makes them more keenly alive to the land and the weather in this Celtic pastoral. Lambing, haymaking, the rituals of tea and whiskey, the berries turning ripe and leaves falling in "ghostly whispering streams": the almost plotless narration follows the lake for just over a year, repeating some descriptions word for word, like proverbs, as spring comes round again. McGahern's work has always suggested what Chekhov would have been like if he'd read D. H. Lawrence; yet here the dark core of passion that got McGahern in trouble with Ireland's censors in the 1960s has been supplanted by an equally risky tenderness. *By the Lake* wagers everything on an attempt to make contentment look interesting, and its account of an apparently unchanging world depends on the cunning of its structure. In his early pages McGahern skillfully blurs the line between past and present as his characters tell one story after another; only later do we realize that he has never quite provided either the date of the book's action or the ages of his protagonists. Joe Ruttledge, who has local roots in the land, has been disclassed by education and a previous career in London. But McGahern barely glances at Joe's decision to leave the city behind, and never allows him to think about the past. It's as if other times and other places don't count; the present is eternal.

Or is it? The lake of the title lies somewhere in the north of the Irish Republic, not far from that border with the other north, a fact that McGahern's characters are mostly able to forget and that the reader will too—until near the end of this subtly intricate book. For this bucolic world has seen terror and cruelty, and even now has its full share of damaged souls. The Ruttledges have managed to avoid most of that. But they, too, have suffered, through a childlessness that they can no longer think about, and McGahern's achievement in this autumnal novel is to remind us how much even a happy life can know of sorrow. —*MICHAEL GORRA*

PEOPLE I MET HITCHHIKING ON USA HIGHWAYS
by ERIC CHAET

"[A] man [is] on a journey...posting his messages on...poles...that will perhaps motivate people...but this is not the point of the book. As reflected in the title, the fascinating parts...are the stories...of ordinary people's dreams, flaws, ideas, insanity, generosity and cruelty... extremes of the human condition, told in a very simple way.... [B]ad jobs, good jobs, growing, relationships...the freedom to travel and the slavery to wage jobs...and how the poor are undermined and dehumanized by the rich and each other.... [P]ortrait of America... beautiful and horrible, awkward and elegant, but extremely rewarding."
- *Reviewer:* Ken Miller, *Philadelphia*

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That Eugene McCabe is not well known outside Ireland is a pity, for he is a splendid writer whose skill, gifts, and creative instinct put him on a par with his more famous countryman and contemporary, William Trevor. True, most of McCabe's work has been for the theater and television, and he has devoted much of his life to farming, but his small output of fiction has earned him a high reputation in his native country. Yet only now is his extraordinary novel *Death and Nightingales* being published in the United States, a decade after its appearance in Britain.

DEATH AND NIGHTINGALES

by Eugene McCabe

Bloomsbury, 231 pages, $23.95

McCabe's work is firmly grounded in his own territory, the border country between Ulster and what is now the Republic. *Death and Nightingales* is set in 1883, in the aftermath of the murder by nationalist terrorists of Lord Frederick Cavendish, the British government's Chief Secretary for Ireland, and his deputy in Dublin's Phoenix Park—a time when the country was paralyzed by suspicion between its peoples. It is the story of two miserable souls yoked together bitterly but unalterably: the middle-aged Protestant landlord and minor industrialist Billy Winters, master of the lovely small estate of Clonoula, and his Catholic stepdaughter, Beth, a resented, adored cuckoo in his nest. Beth chafes under Billy's rule and eventually makes a desperate attempt to escape by throwing in her lot with a furious revolutionary, but the plan, predictably, misfires: nothing, it seems, can end this life sentence of reciprocal animosity and dependence.

Colm Tóibín has called *Death and Nightingales* "clearly one of the great Irish masterpieces of the [twentieth] century," and he is, I think, correct. Beth and, more especially, Billy are no mere archetypes but vivid and eccentric individuals; both in exquisite lyrical description and in his masterly handling of dialogue McCabe demonstrates a mellow, seasoned power. He captures the fine social weave of the country and the time in a few apt words: "Town Hall was packed to the gills with high, middle and low gentry," Billy tells Beth after an evening out. "Old Leslie from Glaslough in his kilt and monocle, and Hare-Foster who was always prancing round your mother ... and two Bishops ... ours and yours. Your wee fella Donnelly had his chain gang with him. Maguires, and liars and small squires and dodgy contractors and cattle-shippers along with the 'millionaire' Micks and Chicago brogues."

The novel's extended metaphor is almost too neat, more a playwright's than a novelist's: Billy the Protestant landlord ruling, loving, and frequently abusing the dispossessed native, Beth (whom he himself named, presumably after Elizabeth I, Ireland's Protestant conqueror), with the revolutionary providing no good alternative. Amusingly and tellingly, none of the protagonists is in any way religious: each one's nominal religion is by now more about history, loss, greed, and tribalism than about God. In fact, both God and grace are notably absent from McCabe's nineteenth-century Ireland, where the entrenched hopelessness of our own day finds its harbinger. —*BROOKE ALLEN*

William Gerhardie (1895–1977) has had many champions. Graham Greene said that he was "the most important new novelist to appear in our young life." Anthony Powell called *The Polyglots* (1925) "a classic"; Evelyn Waugh preferred the more ramshackle and comical *Doom* (1928).

THE POLYGLOTS

by William Gerhardie

Prion/Trafalgar Square, 320 pages $13.00

The two novels have recently been reissued in Prion's Lost Treasures series. Some twenty years ago the distinguished biographer Michael Holroyd organized a reissue of Gerhardie's major works, in hardcover no less, and wrote fervent introductions for the half dozen or so volumes. At about the same time, Holroyd edited, with his fellow biographer Robert Skidelsky, Gerhardie's eccentric history of the twentieth century, *God's Fifth Column* (1981). In short, the author of *Futility* (1922), *Pending Heaven* (1930), and *Resurrection* (1934) has been given every chance to be recognized as ... what?

What, indeed? Mainly, I suppose, an important comic novelist, with a wistful Chekhovian sensibility and a flair for the farcical and outrageous. In *Doom*, for instance, we witness the atomic destruction of Earth, engineered by a mad scientist who believes that mankind's suffering should be brought to a close. Most of the novel, however, focuses on an impetuous publishing tycoon—based on Lord Beaverbrook—and the amorous misadventures of a young novelist, Frank Dickin, the author of the clearly autobiographical *Pale Primroses*. Lord Ottercove is so excited by Frank's novel, which relates an erotic interlude in which the hero sleeps with two beautiful sisters, that he helps promote the book to bestsellerdom and even suggests that its author change his name to ... wait for it ... Charles Dickin. Soon there are journeys in flying automobiles, drunken parties with Russian exiles, much quoting of Shakespeare, and salacious carryings-on at the Kiss-Lick Club. Though sometimes a bit windy with theosophical speculation about realms of the spirit, Gerhardie certainly knew male sexuality: Frank "watched old colleagues overtake him on the road to fame, and felt no jealousy ... but that every woman whom he looked at twice did not immediately yield herself to him was something he found hard to bear, harder to forgive."

DOOM

by William Gerhardie

Prion/Trafalgar Square, 255 pages $13.00

Why, then, for all his merits, isn't Gerhardie at least as much read as, say, the early Aldous Huxley of *Crome Yellow* and *Antic Hay*? I think because his narratives feel slightly unfocused; even these two novels, regarded as his best, tend to meander rather than accelerate toward their conclusions. Though he could be epigrammatic (in *The Polyglots* an unexpected and illegitimate child is called "the flower of spontaneous exultation," and a collection of paintings is "as dull as life"), Gerhardie's style in general has neither the stiletto-sharp ironies of Evelyn Waugh nor the smile-inducing similes of P. G. Wodehouse. His characters dwell amid chaos and absurdity, and tend to look on life with "abject resignation."

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But Gerhardie deserves readers. *The Polyglots* traces Georges Hamlet Alexander Diabologh's involvement with a dysfunctional Russian-Belgian clan in the Far East just after the Great War. There are delicious vignettes of the strong-willed valetudinarian Aunt Teresa; some of the best depictions of young children in modern literature; wonderful portraits of spies, military officers, and servants; and, not least, our hero's obsession with the beautiful Sylvia. "For my own part," Georges writes, "I know of nothing so secretly exhilarating as the first meeting with a good-looking cousin of the opposite sex." Most of these figures are accompanied by verbal leitmotifs (the womanizing Uncle Emmanuel's bits of French; Aunt Teresa's scent, Mon Boudoir), and *The Polyglots* concludes, perhaps with a bow to Proust, as its narrator plans the novel we have just read: "I invite the reader to co-operate with me in a spirit of good will to make the end a happy one for all concerned: buy this book. If you have already bought it, buy it again, and get your brother and mother to buy it ... So tell your friends, tell all your friends—my aunt wants you to."

You heard the man: buy *The Polyglots*, and *Doom* as well, and maybe this time William Gerhardie will join Dawn Powell and Zora Neale Hurston in staying rediscovered. —*MICHAEL DIRDA*

THE VARIETIES OF ROMANTIC EXPERIENCE

by Robert Cohen

Scribner, 224 pages, $23.00

The formidable comic energy of Robert Cohen's new short-story collection derives from the collision of his magnificently self-deceiving characters with the unforgiving world they inhabit. From the psychology professor whose lecture turns into an unintentional admission of his obsession with a student intern to the man imprisoned for taking nude photos of a nine-year-old family friend for his night-school course, Cohen's characters move with the best of intentions toward their worst-case scenarios. Even when they don't come completely undone, they find themselves unceremoniously stripped of their illusions. In "A Flight of Sparks" an aging hippie takes off on a misbegotten journey to Mexico in search of a dying friend's long-lost daughter, only to discover that he has embroiled himself in another man's fantasies. And in "Influence," a witty illustration of Harold Bloom's theory that authors willfully misread one another, a writer-in-residence at a small New England college invites his literary idol for a visit that quickly unravels the knot of mutual deception that has bound them together for so long.

Cohen balances this robust black comedy with moments of quietly profound feeling. In "The Boys at Night" the arrival of a baby with Down syndrome throws into a family an emotional hand grenade that explodes during a bowling expedition, leaving the young narrator with a new appreciation of his aloof father. In "The Bachelor Party" a singularly inept prenuptial bash winds up unexpectedly at the Houston Astrodome, where the groom-to-be movingly asserts his belief in marriage before a crowd of oblivious Astros fans. The real variety on display here turns out to have less to do with romantic experience than with Cohen's ability to evoke seemingly contradictory emotions, often in the course of a single paragraph. —*STEPHEN AMIDON*

EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED

by Jonathan Safran Foer

Houghton Mifflin 288 pages, $24.00

Jonathan Safran Foer is a twenty-four-year-old recent Princeton graduate whose first novel, *Everything Is Illuminated*, has attracted a great deal of pre-publication success and attention. It received a huge advance, reportedly in the neighborhood of $500,000; is the lead debut-section title on Houghton Mifflin's spring list; and is soon to be translated into thirteen languages. Quite a bonanza for an inventive but immature fictional excursion, sometimes pleasant, sometimes just pretentious.

The book was inspired by a trip Foer took to Ukraine to search for his ancestral shtetl and for the heroic woman who saved his grandfather from the Nazis. It consists of two alternating narratives: an imagined history

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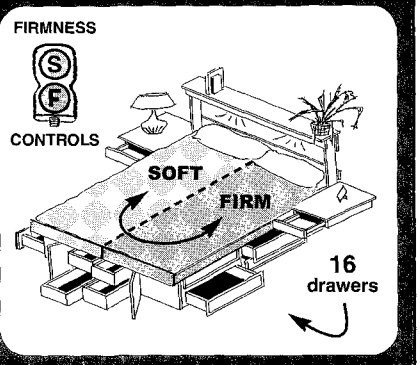

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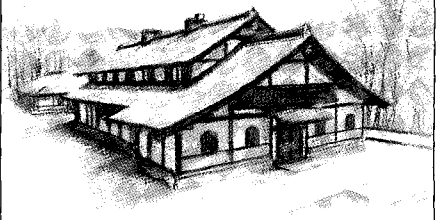

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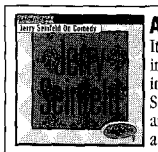

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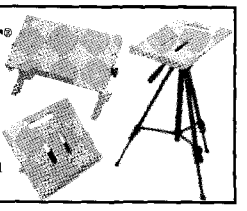

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of the shtetl from the eighteenth century to the twentieth (a fanciful vision that owes a little to Fellini and a lot to Rushdie), and the contemporary story of a search very much like Foer's own, made by a young man named, of all things, "Jonathan Safran Foer."

If this seems like the last word in juvenile solipsism, let it quickly be said that the author makes no attempt to delve into his fictional self's psyche; the narrator and principal character of the modern story is not the quixotic "Jonathan Safran Foer" but his Sancho Panza, a swaggering young Ukrainian named Alexander, whom the American has hired as a guide. Much of the novel's humor derives from Alexander's fractured English and his posturing antics.

That humor, though bought rather cheaply, is deft, but the too frequent flights of lyricism stink of affectation: the long passages on shtetl life are magical-realist in a specifically Jewish way, with the illogic of unrelenting poeticism intensified by the illogic of Talmudic pedantry. And when the two strands of the tale finally come together, it is in an orgy of melodrama and bathos, as we discover that Alexander's gentile family—surprise!—was complicit in the murder of Jews, and that the blustering Alexander himself is really a sensitive gay guy in disguise.

Foer has taken on the Big Subject of the past century—the Holocaust. And, not too surprisingly, it proves to be *too* big a subject for his undeveloped talent. "I wondered," he mused in a statement about his approach to history, "is the Holocaust exactly that which cannot be imagined? What are one's responsibilities to 'the truth' of an event, and what is 'the truth'? Can historical accuracy be replaced with imaginative accuracy?" This seems the height of callowness: for the many people alive who can remember the Holocaust, the answer is that it can be "imagined" only too well. The generation that witnessed it and, to a certain extent, the generation that came directly afterward have treated it as a real, solid, ugly fact of all our lives. To Foer, born more than thirty years after Auschwitz, it is merely the unremembered past, ripe for reinvention and reinterpretation by the artist. —*BROOKE ALLEN*

THE DICKINSONS OF AMHERST

photographs by Jerome Liebling; essays by Christopher Benfey, Polly Longsworth, and Barton Levi St. Armand

University Press of New England, 209 pages, $55.00

Emily Dickinson's reclusive, sparsely documented life was nourished (or poisoned) in the bosom of her family. This generously collaborative volume chronicles that life in suggestive words and pictures, including the odd history of the posthumous discovery and publication of Dickinson's poetry, involving scandalous family quarrels that lasted several generations. Polly Longsworth tells how Emily's father, a congressman and a pillar of the Amherst community, nonetheless misappropriated the money of those under his protection. Emily's brother, Austin, married the poet's best friend, Susan Gilbert, and kept a cultured household that welcomed such visiting luminaries as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Frederick Law Olmsted. Austin and Susan lived with their children next door to Emily and her sister, Lavinia, both spinsters. Mabel Loomis Todd, the lively wife of an Amherst astronomer, became Austin's lover, with the knowledge if not the tolerance of all parties. Barton St. Armand tells how after the poet's death, in 1886, her poems began their vexed journey into the world: Mabel Todd, taking over from Lavinia, edited the early volumes, but for two generations the Dickinson descendants snubbed the Todd descendants on the street and quarreled with them in the Amherst law courts. Christopher Benfey takes up the story when, in 1990, Austin's house fell vacant and the noted photographer Jerome Liebling opened the lenses of his cameras onto a ghostly domestic scenery, including the sealed room of little Gib Dickinson, who died at the age of eight, in 1883. His aunt Emily, in her white dress, left her own home for the last time to sit by his bed. When she died, she left a drawer crammed with hundreds of poems that engage the shimmer between the living and the dead—as this book does. Unreachable through either words or pictures alone, the effect of this multidimensional book is to break your heart. —*PETER DAVISON*

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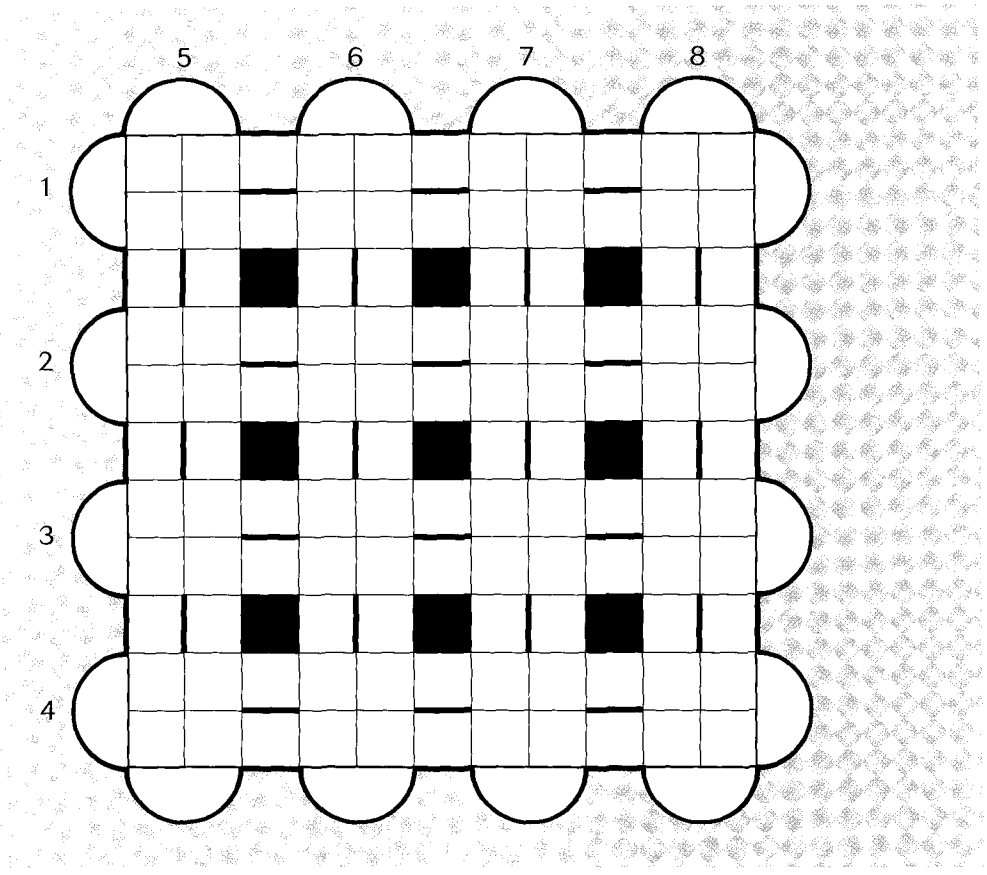
THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX *and* HENRY RATHVON

Loops

Each of the eight closed loops forming this puzzle's grid contains four consecutive words reading clockwise. The loops' starting points and the lengths of their entries are not given, so solvers will need to match intersecting letters in order to align the loops correctly. Solvers achieving the correct solution will find an appropriate reward in the letters projecting from the grid. Six answers are capitalized, and the answers to **3.c** and **7.b** are uncommon terms.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 134



CLUES

1. **a.** Guess: start of next loop is hell
   b. Take control of vast expanses by proclamation?
   c. One hero, possibly?
   d. Dickens' face showing two spots

2. **a.** Piece of rock in sediment looks sideways
   b. Slightly adjusted fabric worn by a king
   c. Strained apricot ultimately canned
   d. Huge insect eating one M & M

3. **a.** Officers turned back sellout crowd
   b. Smoke packs to procrastinate (*two words*)
   c. Accelerate back on street for about a kilometer
   d. Game bird Round Table knight heard

4. **a.** Cryptic clue in "Hearts"
   b. Given information and nourished with cheese?
   c. Large bottles kids attached behind vehicle
   d. Clothing rage: plastic

5. **a.** Bird of prey agitated parrot
   b. In article, notice mid-April story line
   c. New York river loops west, then east by pass
   d. Get burned about large bill

6. **a.** Bird going around prune crate
   b. Small farm frequently starting with pair of crops
   c. Place for investigating our party in Britain
   d. At audition, make a mark next to writer's name

7. **a.** Middle East partisan in operation is trapped by eruption
   b. Archeologists initially attempt breaking into mummy's ancient tomb
   c. Neat, capturing a Trojan king
   d. Crosses second entrance from the east

8. **a.** Persuades one among crew members
   b. Foreign land featured in amateur opera
   c. Corrupt monarch cut short theater projection
   d. Gold-coated cube is so long

Note: *The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.*

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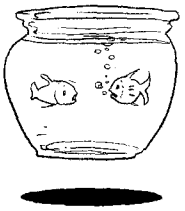


Word Fugitives

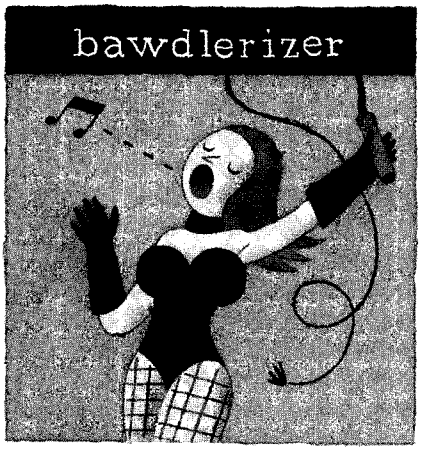
by Barbara Wallraff

Who knew that the lyrics to "Amazing Grace" can be sung to the tune of the *Gilligan's Island* theme song? ("Amazing grace! How sweet the sound / That saved a wretch like me! / I once was lost, but now am found; / Was blind, but now I see." "Ta-dum-dum-dah, ta-dee-dee-dee / Ta-dum-dum-dah-dah-dee," etc.) Well, the Reverend Monsignor Richard Soseman, of Princeville, Illinois, knew it, and shared the information with Word Fugitives in connection with our December request for a word that would mean "taking a lovely song and changing one or two words to make it vulgar." This practice is similar to one that has from time to time claimed Soseman's attention—namely, "taking sacred lyrics and singing them to secular tunes." Soseman lamented, "Once heard this way, they never sound the same again."

A number of other readers sent in examples of vulgarized lyrics (thanks so much, folks!), thereby earning themselves the right to be called by whatever a name would be for people who do this, which was a related word fugitive being sought. A few readers suggested *bawdlerize* and *bawdlerizer*, and others *scat* and *scat singer*. Lori Corbett, of St. Anthony, Idaho, suggested *misongeny* and *misongenist*.

Not every respondent sent in a matched pair of words. Mike McDonald, of San Francisco, played around with *mondegreen*, which *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines as "a series of words that result from the mishearing or misinterpretation of a statement or song lyric," to get *mondeblue* for naughty lyrics. A group identifying itself as "The English Class of the Ministry of the Interior," in Bonn, Germany, wrote, "We would like to suggest *mislieder*. This act, of course, would then become *mislieding*." A number of people suggested *songwronger*, and others *leericist*. Romy Benton, of Portland, Oregon, suggested *ribaldefiler*; Steve Groulx, of Cornwall, Ontario, *opporntunist*; and Nancy Schimmel, of Berkeley, California, *verse-vicer*. Diana K. Colvin, of Portland, Oregon, suggested the cute *humdinger* as a word for the singer, though it might work equally well for the song.

Colvin was also one of a few readers who submitted *perversification*—but she was beaten to the punch by Peter Grant, of St. Catherines, Ontario, who sent in the clear and clever companion form *perversifier* nine days earlier. Grant, therefore, takes top honors—so let's all sing him a rousing chorus of "Four-Cheese Tamales and Jell-O."



The other fugitive requested in December was "a gift that, truth be known, the giver secretly hoped to take possession of for himself." Janet Lafler, of Alameda, California, wrote, "In my experience, every family has a different name for this type of gift, such as *train set* or *Ping-Pong table*." Sure enough, the responses to this question invoked family lore having to do with water skis, a red wagon, goldfish, a basketball, a catcher's mitt, and a child-sized replica of Joe Namath's football uniform.

Amy Houchen, of Portland, Oregon, declared, "The term already exists: it's *sidesaddle*." According to Houchen, this term originated with Peg Bracken, who wrote in her 1964 etiquette book *I Try to Behave Myself*, "'*Sidesaddle*' is our family's name for that good book you give your husband because you want to read it yourself or the croquet set that the croquet fan gives a member of the immediate family for the whole family to enjoy."

But a more intuitive term from a different writer earns top honors here for Leo Standing, of Lennoxville, Quebec. Standing wrote, "This type of gift has been known for half a century as a *rebounder*." He recalls learning the word from an anecdote of Gerald Durrell's, in which Durrell, as a budding young zoologist, gave his mother a wild animal for her birthday and his gun-loving brother Leslie presented her with a large revolver.

Now Gerald Brown, of Pebble Beach, California, writes, "Is there an antonym for *synergy*?"

And Vicki Yuen, of Las Vegas, writes, "As a soccer coach for kindergartners, I encourage the kids to become comfortable controlling the ball with either foot. There's a word for this with the hands: *ambidextrous*. Surely there should be one for the feet. I've used *ambifooterous*, as *ambipederous* sounds awkward. It always gets a laugh, but is there a proper word for this?" Actually, Word Fugitives doesn't much care if there *is* a "proper" word. We'll be content to find Yuen a good one.

Send words that meet Gerald Brown's or Vicki Yuen's needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, *77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by April 30. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like* The Atlantic *'s help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.*

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic *authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent* Warrior Politics, *by Robert D. Kaplan;* The CEO of the Sofa, *by P. J. O'Rourke; and* Fast Food Nation, *by Eric Schlosser.*

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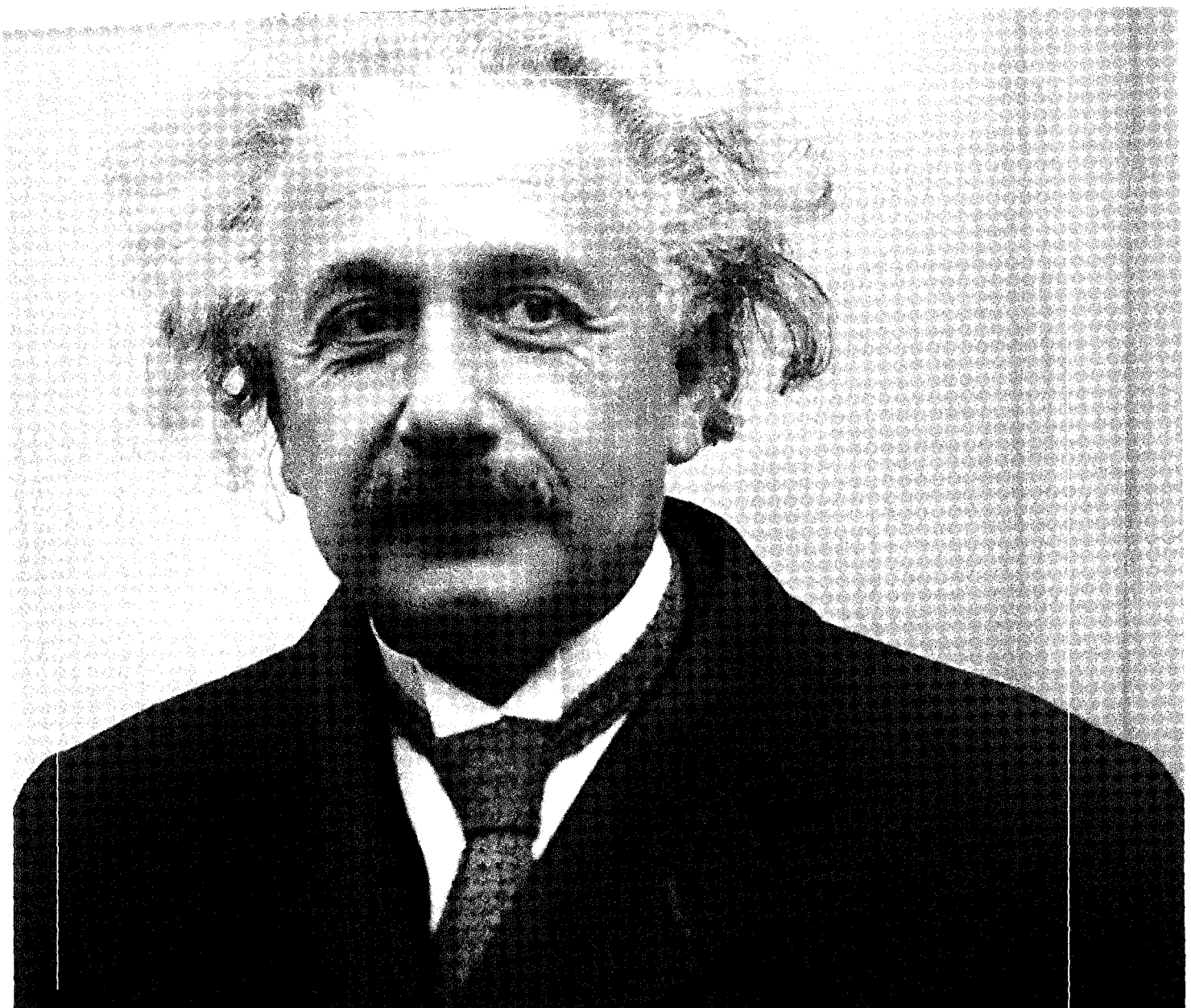

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